

DIAMOND-DICK

BOYS BEST

JR. WEEKLY JR.

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 288.

Price, Five Cents.

DIAMOND DICK AT FULL-HAND FERRY

OR
ROUGH WORK ON RAPID RIVER



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
DIAMOND DICK

AS BERTIE SPRANG TO THE GIRL'S RESCUE, DIAMOND DICK TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE RUFFIAN.

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Diamond Dick at Full-Hand Ferry; OR, ROUGH WORK ON RAPID RIVER.

By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

CHAPTER I.

THE MEXICAN "TIENDA."

"Clickity-clack-clack, clickity-clack-clack," went the castanets.

"Zoom, zoom, zoom," came the deep strains of the bass viol.

And over and through these sounds could be heard the tinkling tones of the guitar, but it was no Spanish air the instruments were playing, although the dance was going forward in a Mexican "tienda" at Dos Cabezos.

Half a dozen "adobes" comprised the settlement of Dos Cabezos, and of these half-dozen houses, the tienda was the largest and best.

But that was not saying much.

The tienda was a long, low building, fringed about with palms and shrubs.

In the front part of the establishment you could buy anything from pulque to sewing machines, and in the rear you could either dance or play monte, as pleased you.

These Mexican tiendas all have names, and this one at Dos Cabezos sported a Spanish superlative which, interpreted, meant "The Place of Precious Things."

When we ring up the curtain it is evening, a dance is in progress, and through the open windows stream glares of light and come the sounds indicated above.

But those are not the only sounds.

Listen:

"S'lute yer podners. Fust four for'ard an' back. Ladies' chain an' balance in a line. Ally-mand left, an' mind you don't git left! Take off them spurs, Dutch Charley; they're ketchin' in everybody's clo's

an' sp'ilin' the figgers! Fust for for'ard ag'in an' pass right through. S'lute yer podners. None o' yer lip, Dutch, or I'll turn loose with my hardware an' they'll hev ter rustle another man fer that set."

A lithe form, approaching noiselessly and swiftly toward one of the windows through the brush heard the raucous tones of the "caller-off."

Reaching the window, he looked in and saw a score of people, Mexican señoritas and caballeros, American women and cowboys, mixing indiscriminately and all bent on having a good time.

As the dark figure stood peering into the room, a second form, like an evil shadow, skulked out of the thicket and moved forward in crouching attitude and with cat-like softness.

What sounds the second man unavoidably made were drowned by the noise in the dance hall.

When within a few yards of the form at the window, the second man upstarted, a knife flashing in his hand in the light that came from the tienda.

"Curse you, Nixon! You'll never live to follow the trail you've started on!"

The man at the window turned.

He was young, he had hair that fell about his shoulders, and from the looped-up brim of his sombrero and from other points about his natty Mexican costume flashed the many-hued gleams of brilliants.

The man with the knife paused as though spellbound, the blade upraised.

He was full in the light, and showed himself to be coarsely featured, and to be clad in the leather *chaparrejos* and flannel shirt of a cowboy.

But he had not the bowed legs and rolling gait which the true puncher acquires on the hurricane deck of his bronk.

So this man may have been a pretender.

"You're shy a few chips this deal, stranger," said the youth in the Mexican get-up. "If it's Nixon you want to knife you're up against the wrong proposition. Easy with that blade! Poised though it is, I could put a bullet through your heart before it could fall."

"Diamond Dick!" exclaimed the man with the knife, breathlessly.

"Diamond Dick, Jr.," corrected the youth.

"Beg yore parding, Diamond Dick, Jr.," mumbled the man, putting up his bowie with a shame-faced air. "I could a' sworn ye was Hank Nixon. Hank has cut me out with my gal, an' I'm a goin' ter do him ef he don't do me fust."

Turning, the man slouched off into the darkness, and a low laugh fell from the young sport's lips.

A moment later a quick, sharp whistle echoed from behind a hedge of pomegranates.

Bertie returned it as he advanced, and presently met a tall form which parted the bushes and stepped out in front of him.

"Diamond Dick!" exclaimed Bertie.

"You got my message all right?" returned the old veteran.

"Two-Spot delivered it to me not more than three hours ago."

"Where is the New York kid now?"

"I left him at Gidding's rancho. Have you come on from Ouray with only Two-Spot?"

"Handsome Harry accompanied me."

"Where is he?"

"Down in the arroyo with his horse and mine."

"I was surprised to get your message, Diamond Dick. What's to pay?"

"I don't know, as yet. I received a note from Nixon, a San Francisco sleuth, asking me to meet him here, at this tienda in Dos Cabezos, at this hour."

"Nixon!" exclaimed the young sport, recalling the words of the man who had attempted to use the knife.

"Yes, Henry Nixon."

"Go on," said young Diamond Dick.

"That's all," replied the old veteran. "Here we are and now all that remains for us to do is to find Nixon."

"Haven't you any idea what Nixon wants of us?"

"No, except that there's a desperate game of some

kind on. The word he sent me came from Tanglefoot."

Thereupon the young sport narrated the incident of the man with the bowie.

"Well!" murmured Diamond Dick. "That is an interesting starter and speaks much for the desperate character of the work Nixon has got on hand."

"Why are we mixing up in it?"

"Nixon says our railroad is concerned in some way."

"I wish he had been a little more explicit."

"He's a man who doesn't shy at trifles, Bertie."

"So I've heard."

"And he's a tip-top good fellow, into the bargain. If he's in the dance hall we will find him and soon learn all that he has to tell us. Come on."

The Dicks at once started for the entrance to the tienda.

Young Diamond Dick had left Ouray three or four days previous to this meeting with the veteran in Dos Cabezos, and had gone to look at a mine in the Mogollon Mountains.

An Eastern syndicate had requested him to do this and to give an expert report as to the mine's value.

What the young sport hadn't learned about mines from his own experience and from old Diamond Dick's, was hardly worth knowing, and it had taken him less than two hours to discover that a company of local sharpers were trying to fleece the Easterners out of their money.

Disgusted and indignant, Diamond Dick, Jr., had expressed himself in no very gentle terms to the sharpers, and thereupon they had offered him several thousand dollars to make a false report.

The young sport's answer was emphatic and to the point.

He said nothing, but knocked down the man who had tried to subsidize him and returned to Giddings' rancho, where he had made his headquarters.

On arriving at the ranch he had found Two-Spot Peters waiting for him with the message from Diamond Dick.

As Two-Spot had made a long ride, and his horse

was in no condition to return at once to Dos Cabezos, the young sport left him at Giddings', and the boy was to come on as soon as he thought advisable to do so.

As they walked slowly toward the dance hall, old Diamond Dick asked the young sport about his success over in the Mongollon district.

Bertie replied briefly with the details.

"Who are the men back of the attempted swindle?" Diamond Dick asked.

"A villain who calls himself Kench Lattimer is one of them," Bertie answered, "but the names of the others I do not know."

"I've heard of Kench. He hasn't a very savory reputation in these parts."

By that time the Diamond Dicks were so close to the tienda that the music, the scuffling of feet and the high voices in the dance hall made it impossible for them to converse.

"Hey, tar, you, Petie of the J-O!" yelled the caller-off, high above the medley of other sounds. "A gent ain't got no business on the floor when he's so full he kain't travel through the grand, right-an-left! Now, then—promenade all an'——"

The caller-off was interrupted by the sharp, incisive crack of a revolver.

Instantly the music, the loud laughter and the scuffling of feet became stilled as if by magic.

There fell a deep silence of tragic import—a silence that prevailed for a fraction of a minute only.

Then came the screams of women and the fierce and angry cries of the men.

"Nixon's got it!"

"Andy Newcomer turned loose with his forty-four."

"Grab Andy! Kill him! Don't let him git away!"

These, among other shouts, were heard by the Dicks above the sudden turmoil and confusion now reigning in the dance hall.

"That fellow who tackled you must have turned a gun on Nixon in the building there," said the old veteran, increasing his gait to a run. "And there

isn't any woman at the bottom of it. It's a play of Nixon's enemies to get him out of their road."

Diamond Dick, Jr., was close after old Diamond Dick as the latter dashed through the front part of the tienda and burst into the dance hall.

CHAPTER II.

NIXON.

In the long, low-ceiled room where the merry-making had been going on there was the wildest kind of excitement.

Women were talking in high and frantic voices, and the men, gathered in knots, were discussing the shooting in hoarse and impassioned tones.

Some of the dancers were standing around a bench in the front end of the hall, while others were grouped about a door in the rear.

"How did this happen?" asked old Diamond Dick.

The Dicks were immediately recognized, if not by their faces, then by the clothes they wore, for their renown had spread all through that section of the country.

"Andy Newcomer tried ter make a killin', Dimun Dick," answered a long-haired puncher who wore a rattlesnake band around his hat. "He stood right up thar in the middle of the floor an' shot Nixon of ole Nogales, as we useter call him, although he now hails from 'Frisco."

"Who is this Newcomer?"

"He's lately arrived on this rodeo, which is why the boys spotted him with that thar label."

"Why did he shoot Nixon?"

"Thet's a cornundrum. Nixon wasn't dancin', hasn't swapped half a dozen words with any hombre sence he's been in the hall, an' was jest settin' in a chair an' lookin' on. Ef we kin git Newcomer out o' thet back room we'll give him a dance in the air at the end o' six feet o' rope."

"Out of what room?"

"See that door back thar?"

The puncher waved his hand toward the rear door in front of which some of the dancers were collected.

"I see the door," said Diamond Dick.

"Wall, thet door leads inter a room which ain't got no windows an' no other doors aside from the one ye're lookin' at. Newcomer's in thar. He made a rush an' dodged in right arter the shootin' when everyone was kinder in a trance like. Andy has got his guns an' he swears he'll kill the fust half-dozen thet try ter git him."

"Was Nixon killed?"

"Nary, but badly hurt."

"Where is he?"

"Over thar on the bench."

"Can he talk?"

"Sure."

Diamond Dick started toward the bench, but halted before he had gone more than four or five steps.

"Watch that door and see that Newcomer doesn't come out. I'll be there in a few moments, and take care of him."

"What?"

Diamond Dick repeated his words.

"Consarn it, Dimun Dick!" exclaimed the puncher. "When ye open the door ye'll be plum in the light, Andy'll be in the dark, an' he'll riddle ye."

"I'll chance it."

The old veteran went on to the bench and the young sport followed him.

Nixon, a lithe, spare-built, middle-aged man, was stretched out on the bench, a rolled-up coat under his head.

His wound was in the left shoulder, well above the heart, and had been bound by one of the women.

He was in great pain, but not a sigh or a whimper escaped his lips.

At sight of the Dicks his face lighted up and he stretched out his right hand to the old veteran and the young sport in turn.

"I knew you'd come," said he, "but it's tough luck that you find me like this, a deadhead in the enterprise taht's to follow."

"It's hard lines, Nixon, as you say. How's the injury?"

"Bad enough, but I've only kicked at the bucket and not upset it."

A grim smile overspread the strong, pallid face of the detective.

"Is this Newcomer one of the gang you are after?"

"Yes."

"Then, after you recover, you can take the field against the outfit."

"No," returned Nixon, faintly; "the work must be taken up at once. The iron is hot and now is the time to strike. This is a critical moment with the affairs of the gang, and that is the reason this bold move was made to get me out of the way."

"Did Newcomer know that you were to meet us here to-night?"

"I think not."

"What's the deal you have on hand?"

Nixon started to speak, but noticing the curious faces of the men and women who surrounded the bench, he paused and waved his hand.

They understood the gesture and moved away out of earshot, leaving Nixon alone with the Dicks.

"Your road, Dick, is assisting in a scheme to defraud the United States Government."

"How?"

The question came from both the old veteran and the young sport.

"By hauling opium that never paid a cent of duty to Uncle Sam."

"We have hauled no opium," said Diamond Dick, astonished at the detective's statement.

"It is billed out as assayers' slag and consigned to the North Pacific Smelting Company, San Francisco. There's no such smelting company, and Chinamen claim the supposed slag and use it in the opium joints of Chinatown. This opium is the prepared article, you understand, and the duty is \$6 a pound."

"From what point is it consigned?" asked Diamond Dick, Jr.

"From the station at Tanglefoot, above Ouray."

"How does it get to Tanglefoot?" put in Diamond Dick.

"It comes across the border somehow, and is smuggled to the station on your line. This makes the shipment look all right."

"Do you know anything about the gang?"

"Not a thing, except that the ore is ostensibly shipped by the Grubstake Mining Company, and that this Newcomer makes the shipments from Tanglefoot."

"How did you discover that?"

"I had my suspicions aroused and succeeded in covertly examining a consignment in San Francisco, before it was called for. After my examination, the opium was boxed up again. The Chinamen who called for it are being watched and I came on to Tanglefoot and saw Newcomer bring in a lot of the stuff."

"I could have arrested the fellow then and there, but I resolved to play a waiting game and corner the whole of his gang, if possible. Before leaving Tanglefoot I sent you word to meet me at Dos Cabezas, for this place, as I learned, is the one to which Newcomer was going."

"I did not expect to meet Newcomer in this dance hall, and when he came, for once in my life I was caught napping. He must have learned in some way that I was on his trail."

"You ran down a lot of smugglers over by Ft. Miles, Diamond Dick, and your success in that job led me to think you could help me gain success in this."

"Those Ft. Miles smugglers were engaged in running Chinamen into the country in defiance of the exclusion laws."

"They were smugglers, all the same. I thought you could help me, as I say, but now it is up to you to do the trick alone. Will you and Diamond Dick, Jr., try it?"

"Of course. They were using the T. N. and P. Railroad, and that rings us in on the deal."

"What will be your first move?"

"The capture of Newcomer."

A sparkle leaped into the detective's eyes.

"I could have sworn that that would be your answer!" he exclaimed.

Diamond Dick started away, but whirled and came back.

"It won't do for you to remain here, Nixon," said he.

"I know that, and I am to be taken to the house of Caspar Del Ray, a Greaser who is a good friend of mine. I will be well cared for and protected—if it comes to that."

"Then, if we wish to communicate with you, we will come to Del Ray's house?"

"Yes."

The Dicks then left the detective and walked toward the room at the rear.

"We must get hold of this Newcomer," said Diamond Dick to Bertie.

"It's a delicate proposition to handle," remarked the young sport. "There'll be a fight in the dark—"

"Certainly," interrupted the old veteran, giving young Diamond Dick a quick look, "but can you doubt the result?"

"No," Bertie replied.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIGHT IN THE DARK.

There were brave men there in the dance hall, but there was not one of the cowboys who wished to court death by opening the door of the rear room and attempting the capture of a desperate man armed with two revolvers and a knife.

The long-haired puncher had told of Diamond Dick's intention to make the capture single-handed, and the idea, by some, was looked upon as hare-brained; but others, who knew Diamond Dick better, had more confidence in the outcome.

As the veteran drew close, the group parted from before the door.

Dick knocked on the panels.

The answer to the summons was an oath.

"Newcomer," said Diamond Dick, "you're at the end of your rope. Will you surrender peaceably?"

"I'll never surrender! Ef I'm taken, it'll be with my boots on."

"That's the way you'll be taken, then."

"Who's that torkin'?"

"Diamond Dick, of Ouray."

Newcomer muttered something which could not be distinguished by those on the other side of the door.

Then he said:

"I'm up ag'inst it, I know that well enough, but I've got the lives of half a dozen right in my fists. Try ter take me, Dimun Dick, an' I'll snuff yer candle too quick."

"Come over this way, gentlemen," said the old veteran, stepping back a few feet from the door and motioning the crowd to move away. "I want to counsel with you as to the easiest method of capturing this man."

The crowd was surprised at the old veteran's words.

But Diamond Dick, Jr., was not.

He read Diamond Dick's purpose clearly, and drew the crowd several yards away from the door of the rear room.

Then, noiselessly, old Diamond Dick approached the entrance to the rear chamber.

A second later and he had hurled open the door, placed himself on the other side of it and slammed it shut.

It was all done with a rapidity which was well-nigh inconceivable and the old veteran's purpose in summoning the crowd apart for "counsel" was instantly apparent.

It was a trick to take Newcomer off his guard.

Bertie and the others could not tell, of course, just how far the old veteran had succeeded.

There was a quick shot at the identical moment the door was closed, evidently fired by Newcomer.

And it was certain that this shot was without effect, for the reason that two men could be heard moving around in the room.

Presently more shots were fired, there came the

sound of a scuffle, hoarse words from Newcomer, a fall, then silence.

Those in the dance hall were listening breathlessly. They heard nothing more, and the seconds dragged by like minutes.

Then, unable to stand the suspense any longer, the young sport threw open the door and peered into the darkness.

The smell of burnt powder which assailed his nostrils was stifling.

Nor could he see anything, and the same deathly stillness reigned in the small apartment.

"Bring a light," said Diamond Dick, Jr., stepping across the threshold.

Some one brought a lamp, and many of the cowboys and a few of the women crowded into the room.

It was empty!

Exclamations of wonder went up from every one.

"The devil's back o' this," solemnly averred the long-haired puncher.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the young sport. "There was some means of getting out. Newcomer found the way and Diamond Dick took after him."

"Thar ain't no way of getting in or out except through that thar door!" averred the long-haired man.

"You're mistaken, my friend," returned Bertie. "Who owns this tienda?"

"Old Bart Garcia."

"Bring him here."

Several went to perform the work, but old Bart was not to be found.

In the front part of the building there was a clerk, and this clerk said he hadn't any idea where Garcia had gone, but that he had left at about the time old Diamond Dick went into the back room to capture Newcomer.

Bertie, meanwhile, had been examining the room.

It was about ten feet square, and was used as a storeroom for old Bart's supply of liquor.

Three large barrels lay with their ends against the rear wall, two side by side, and the third on top.

"Ah, ha!" murmured Bertie, after a few moments spent in examining the barrels. "If you will all step out into the other room," said he, turning to the men and women around him, "I'll do the vanishing act myself."

The curious crowd filed out and closed the door.

Then the young sport stooped, pushed his head against the top barrel in the pile of three.

The end of the barrel gave beneath the push and he was able to crawl in and through the barrel, and out at the other end.

The other end was against a hole in the adobe wall, and when Bertie finished crawling he was outside of the house.

The hole in the wall was masked by a growing vine.

It was a very ingenious arrangement.

While Diamond Dick, Jr., stood outside, examining the contrivance and wondering what use old Bart could have made of it, he heard the cowboys enter and give vent to their exclamations of astonishment.

The young sport, anxious to learn what had become of old Diamond Dick, did not pause to explain the mystery to those in the tienda, but hurried away through the brush, now and again whistling a signal which, if heard by the veteran, would have been instantly answered.

But no answer was returned.

As a last resort, Bertie made his way to the house of Caspar Del Ray.

A knock brought Del Ray himself to the door.

The Mexican wore a smile as he shielded with one hand the lamp which he was carrying and fixed his eyes on the young sport.

"You are young Diamond Dick, senor?"

"Yes," replied Bertie. "Is Henry Nixon here?"

"He is, senor. Enter."

Bertie went in, and, to his surprise, found not only Nixon but old Diamond Dick, as well—the latter seated at the head of the cot on which the detective was lying.

"Astonished, Bertie?" smiled the old veteran, who, so far as the young sport could see, had not so much

as a scratch to show for his recent encounter with Newcomer.

"I'm astonished at finding you here, Diamond Dick," Bertie replied. "As for the way you and Newcomer got out of the room, I was not long in discovering that. In fact, I crawled through the barrel myself. A singular contrivance to find in a place like that tienda!"

"Old Bart is as crooked a stick as there is in the country," put in Nixon. "When monte is played for high stakes the game sometimes comes off in that little back room. Many a man, as I've heard, has gone into a game in that den, lost consciousness, and finally came to himself several miles from Dos Cabezos, minus money and an understanding of what had been done to him."

"Why isn't old Bart arrested?"

"It's impossible to fasten any crime onto him. He's a sly old fox."

"I'll bet a hundred he helped Newcomer out of that room!" exclaimed Bertie, and explained how old Bart had proved to be missing when sent for.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Nixon; "but to prove it is the next thing."

"What happened to Newcomer, Diamond Dick?" Bertie asked, turning to the old veteran.

"I didn't want to take him with his boots on," replied Dick, "so I only wounded him. It was difficult to shoot accurately in the blank darkness, and Newcomer was popping away in all directions to get me."

"But I was flat on the floor, and before I fired, the sound of his shooter had located him pretty well. I winged him, I think, and then I caught him by the feet and downed him."

"Right there is where a third man took a hand, and possibly this third man was old Bart, as you call him."

"The top barrel, Andy," I heard a voice say.

"Then I was rapped on the head with a good deal of force, the feet were pulled out of my hands, and Newcomer and the other fellow began to slide out."

"The blow I had received made me a trifle dizzy, and I was not able to intercept either of the two men. I followed them, however, and when I dropped out of the hole in the end wall of the house I could see one of them making in the direction of the arroyo where Harry was waiting."

"Newcomer—for when we got clear of the brush

the moonlight showed me that the man I was following was the one I wanted—also had a horse in that section.

"As he leaped into the saddle and darted away, Handsome Harry rode up.

"Harry had heard the shooting in the tienda and you can imagine, Bertie, in what a state of mind he was.

"I did not answer any of Harry's questions, but pointed to Newcomer as he and his horse topped a rise.

"Follow that fellow, old pard, but don't let him know you are on his trail if you can help it. Find out where he's going and send word to me at the house of Caspar Del Ray."

"That was enough for the old Serpent. He pointed his horse in the direction taken by Newcomer and was off at full speed.

"My horse was further back in the arroyo, and I left the animal there to come back here and have a word with Nixon."

"What was your reason for sparing Newcomer?" young Diamond Dick asked.

"Dead men tell no tales, you know, Bertie," Diamond Dick answered. "I wanted to capture Newcomer so that I might force some information from him. But it is better as it is. He might have proved obstinate, if captured, and refused to say a word. Now he will lead Handsome Harry toward the rendezvous of the opium smugglers, and I am sure we may expect important developments very soon."

"No doubt of it," put in the detective.

Nixon's wound had been dressed by Del Ray, who was something of a physician, and he was feeling much better.

After a few minutes' talk with Nixon, the Dicks were about to leave and seek quarters for the night; but Del Ray insisted that they remain at his house, and Diamond Dick was not slow to accept the invitation.

Any report which Handsome Harry might send was to come there, and hence it was best that the old veteran and the young sport should be where they could receive such a report without loss of a moment's time.

Bertie went to the arroyo and got Diamond Dick's horse and, on his way back, picked up his own mount and put both animals in Del Ray's stable.

Then he went into the house and bunked on the floor of the sitting-room with his saddle for a pillow.

Diamond Dick was already on a lounge and sleeping as soundly as though any moment might not bring him a summons for a wild ride and desperate work.

The summons came, but not until morning, and while the Dicks and Del Ray were at breakfast.

A loud rap fell on the door, and Del Ray's wife went to find out what was wanted.

"Is Diamond Dick here?" cried an excited voice, immediately recognized by the Dicks.

"The New York kid!" exclaimed Bertie.

"Come in, Two-Spot!" called the old veteran.

The Bowery boy pushed past the Mexican woman and ran into the room.

"Gee! but this is luck!" exclaimed the boy. "If I hadn't connected with one of you at least, I'd have been all balled up."

"When did you leave Giddings' rancho?" asked Bertie.

"I can throw that into you later, Bertie, but just now, if you two want to be in the cast, you've got to get a gait."

"What's doing?"

"It's the Red-Top One, this time. He cut into a raw deal and got the gaff before he knew the other dubs were next to him."

"What's the matter with Harry?"

This from old Diamond Dick as he leaped up from the table.

"Trapped."

"Where?"

"Just this side the ferry on Rapid River."

"Which ferry?" asked Nixon from his cot. "Flaherty's or Full-Hand?"

"Full-Hand. It's a case of ride, Diamond Dick, and hit nothing but the high places."

There was no time for talk just then.

Diamond Dick, Jr., already had his saddle under his arm and was racing for the door.

The old veteran followed quickly, and Two-Spot lingered only to grab a couple of tortillas off the table, and then he, too, made off at a run.

His horse stood at the door and he was mounted and waiting when the Dicks, riding Nick-o'-the-Night and Bear-Paw, came careering around the end of the barn.

Two-Spot joined them and away they went, headed for Rapid River.

CHAPTER IV.

BEGINNING THE ROUGH WORK.

The New York kid galloped along behind the Dicks, eating the tortillas as he rode.

The trail was wide and Diamond Dick drew apart from Bertie and motioned for Two-Spot to ride in between.

The boy did so.

"When did you leave Giddings' rancho?" inquired the old veteran.

"About three in the morning, Diamond Dick."

"That was a queer time to start, Two-Spot," remarked Bertie.

"That's right, too. But I got tired doing the ham-resting act. Besides, I knew that Diamond Dick and Handsome Harry had taken their corners for some sort of a set-to, and I wanted to be in the vicinity when the go was pulled off. The horse had had a good feed and several hours' rest, so I climbed into the saddle and used the quirt.

"You know how that trail that leads to Giddings' ranch follows the river for a mile or two, Bertie. Well, I hadn't much more than struck that part of it when I got the jolt of my life."

"Some one took to usin' their hardware off to the left in the timber, and I was about to push in that direction, and see what was doing, when a girl, on horseback, broke through the brush."

"She put up a hollar when she piped me off, and I thought she would throw a fit before I could convince her that I wasn't such a tough proposition as I looked."

"We had no difficulty in using our gig-lamps. It was getting along toward sunup, by then, and when the girlerino had spent a couple of minutes sizin' me up, she asked where I was pointed for, and I told her."

"Then she fired a shot that nearly took me out of the saddle."

"Do you know a man called Diamond Dick?"

"I replied that I was one of Diamond Dick's pards, and she acted as though tickled to death."

"What she told me, after that, took several minutes, and the gist of it was this:

"A cove callin' himself Handsome Harry had come to her father's shanty, a little while before, and offered a tenner to the old man to take a message to Diamond Dick, who could be found in Dos Cabezas, and more than likely at the house of Caspar Del Ray."

"The old man had rheumatism and couldn't go, so the girl had offered. Harry told her to tell Diamond Dick that the gang he was after was rounded up somewhere beyond Full-Hand Ferry, on Rapid River.

"The girlerino went out to saddle her horse, and just as she was about to pull her freight an attack was made on the house by a dozen men, and that was when the shooting I had heard was brought about.

"The girl was at the barn, some distance from the house, and she managed to slip away into the timber unseen, and thus meet up with me in the trail.

"Just as she finished her talk, we heard a thump of hoofs and backed into the timber where we would be out of sight.

"A minute more and the gang galloped past with the old Serpent tied to the back of a horse. They were leadin' two nags with empty saddles and a couple of the gun-fanners had their arms tied up, so I knew that they had had a time of it getting Harry on the mat.

"When they had slid by, the girl suggested that I ride on to Dos Cabezos and carry Harry's message while she trailed along to see what was done with him.

"I couldn't think of anything better, so I hiked for town."

The old veteran listened to Two-Spot's report in silence, a grave expression on his face.

"Newcomer must have found out that Harry was following him," said Diamond Dick, Jr., "and when Harry went to that house to get some one to carry word to town, the gang followed him."

"That's the way of it," returned the old veteran; "and Harry wasn't captured until he had done for two of his enemies and wounded two. They'll even up by putting Harry out of the game, unless——"

The old veteran paused.

"Unless we can get him away before they attempt to carry out their designs," finished Bertie.

"That's it," replied Diamond Dick.

"Did the girl say anything about where she would meet you?" asked Two-Spot.

"She didn't say a thing about meeting me," replied the New York kid, "but I think I can take you straight to the place where she lives."

"That's where we want to go," went on Diamond Dick. "Whatever we do we must do in a hurry. Our old pard's life is at stake."

With this thought uppermost in their minds, they

pushed their horses to even a faster gait and were soon galloping along the trail at the point where it paralleled Rapid River.

They found, much to their satisfaction, that it was not necessary for them to go to the girl's home for she pushed out of the chaparral at the point where she had met Two-Spot earlier in the morning.

"There she is!" exclaimed the New York kid, drawing rein.

The girl was about sixteen, Diamond Dick judged, and was poorly dressed.

"I've brought 'em," said Two-Spot. "This is the old fighter himself, sis, and son Bertie, a chip off the old block. Did you find out where they took Handsome Harry?"

"I've found out all about where they took him," the girl replied, giving the old veteran a critical look and then turning her eyes on the young sport.

"Where is he?" asked Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Over in the old lumber camp across the river. But you won't be able ter go on yer hosses. They kin be left up to the house."

The girl herself was on foot, and, as she spoke, she jerked her head backward to indicate the direction of her home.

"Why is it necessary to leave our horses?" asked Diamond Dick.

"'Kase we have ter climb a hill that's too steep fer anythin' on hoofs. An' I've found out somethin' else," the girl went on.

"What's that?" Diamond Dick returned, as he swung himself down from the saddle.

"'Bout a mile above the ferry there's a big boat, an' the fellers that captured Han'some Harry left their critters there when they took him across the river."

"They took him across the river in the big boat?"

"Nary, Dimun Dick. The big boat's full o' somethin', but they had another boat handy—a rowboat—an' they used that."

"What is your name?" Bertie inquired.

"Nance Hawkins. Dad useter work in the lumber camp till he got the rheumatism, but now he's laid up an' kain't do a thing. All we live on is what I kin shoot. But you better hustle. There ain't no time ter fool away if ye want ter save Han'sum Harry."

The Dicks agreed with the girl fully.

"You take the horses up to the house, Two-Spot," said Diamond Dick.

"Then what?" queried the New York kid.

"Then you can do as you please, only keep your eyes open and be on the lookout for trouble. We're liable to have rough work, and there's a big gang against us."

The Dicks and Nance Hawkins went away, and Two-Spot, riding his own horse and leading Nick-o'-the-Night and Bear-Paw, was not a little disappointed as he pushed his way through the chaparral.

But, nevertheless, fate had reserved a good share in the "rough work" for the New York kid.

CHAPTER V.

A LIVELY TIME ON THE FERRYBOAT.

The Full-Hand Ferry, which Nance Hawkins and the Dicks reached within a quarter of an hour after parting from Two-Spot, was a very primitive affair.

A rope was stretched from bank to bank, and along this rope the ferryman pulled the old scow which did service as a ferryboat.

Just before they got to the ferry, Nance had halted in front of a log cabin and given a yell.

A slatternly woman appeared in the doorway.

"Where's Neb, Mis' Hosmer?" cried Nance.

"He's gone down ter the ferry, Nance, ter take a man acrost."

"How long since?"

"Not more'n five minits. Hurry an' ye kin ketch the boat afore it leaves. That'll save Neb makin' two trips."

So, for the remaining hundred rods of the way, the girl and her two companions made good speed.

When they came in sight of the boat, Neb Hosmer was pulling his passenger across the river and was several yards from the shore.

The passenger was a tough-looking scoundrel, in cowboy equipment, but without a horse, and when Hosmer started to draw the boat back, he laid a rough hand on Hosmer's arm and spoke sharply to him.

It seemed as though the cowboy was trying to persuade Hosmer to go on and then come back after the Dicks and the girl.

But the current of the river was swift, and to stem its tide required the outlay of considerable muscle, so Hosmer did not seem inclined to yield to his passenger's desire.

Standing at the edge of the water, the Dicks saw

the cowboy look toward the shore, and Bertie muttered an exclamation.

"What is it?" asked the old veteran.

"That fellow is Kench Lattimer" Diamond Dick, Jr., answered in an undertone.

"The man who tried to hire you to give a false report on that mine?"

"The same man. It was my fist that raised that lump on his forehead."

"It's easy to be seen why he doesn't want Hosmer to put back. He isn't anxious to meet you at close quarters again, Bertie."

When Kench Lattimer's eyes fell on Nance Hawkins, however, his mind seemed to undergo a change.

"All right," the Dicks heard him say to Hosmer, and then he retreated to the farther end of the scow and turned his back while the ferryman was regaining the shore.

"Got some more bonanza mines over in this section, Lattimer?" young Diamond Dick asked, as he jumped aboard the boat.

Lattimer, still with his back turned, pretended not to hear.

"Two-bits apiece, gents," said Hosmer, and old Diamond Dick paid for the three.

While the boatman was hand-over-handing his way along the lawser, young Diamond Dick stepped to the old veteran's side at the end of the boat farthest from Lattimer.

"Lattimer has a shady record, you say, Diamond Dick?" Bertie inquired.

"According to report," replied Diamond Dick.

"It's more than possible that he's one of this gang of opium smugglers."

"That is just what occurred to me."

"Why not take him in tow on general principles? If he is really one of the smugglers we may be able to find out something of importance."

Before the old veteran could answer a childish scream for help was heard.

Diamond Dick and Bertie whirled about in a flash and saw that Nance Hawkins was in the river.

Instantly young Diamond Dick threw off his hat and coat and began unbuckling his revolver belt.

"She stumbled and fell over the side!" cried Lattimer.

"'Tain't so!" declared Neb Hosmer. "Consarn ye, Lattimer, ye knocked her over."

"Ye're another!" yelled Lattimer, fiercely.

"I know what I'm talkin' about!" went on Hosmer. "Ye knocked the gal overboard—I seen ye!"

"If all I hear of him is true," said the old veteran, beginning a wary advance upon Lattimer, "he's capable of such work."

"Keep yer distance, Dimun Dick!" cried the scoundrel, threateningly, jerking a revolver from his belt.

But the threat might as well have been thrown to the winds, for, as Bertie sprang to the girl's rescue, Diamond Dick gave his attention to the ruffian.

The young sport had left his mark on Lattimer's forehead, and now the old veteran, before the revolver could figure in the set-to, landed heavily on the point of his chin.

Lattimer dropped his shooter and fell like a log.

"Good enough fer him," grunted Neb Hosmer.

At that juncture a cry from Bertie claimed the attention of Hosmer and Diamond Dick.

The young sport had caught the girl and was swimming and supporting her head above the water.

The current was carrying them downstream and they were almost under the hawser.

"Throw us a rope if you've got one," shouted young Diamond Dick.

"Ain't got no rope," said Neb.

"Press down on that hawser," said Dick, throwing himself down on the rope and forcing it toward the surface of the river.

This incident had taken place almost in midstream, and the weight of the cable caused it to sag downward.

As Bertie was swept under, he reached up and caught the hawser.

"Now," went on Dick, "let's draw the scow toward him and take him aboard."

"Thet's the thing ter do," replied Hosmer, and he and the old veteran applied their united strength to the hawser.

Steadily, foot by foot, they came closer to Bertie and the girl.

Going to the end of the boat, Diamond Dick knelt down and had almost caught Bertie when something happened and happened with extreme suddenness.

The old veteran had supposed that Lattimer would be some time recovering, but a good part of the villain's apparent condition had been merely a sham.

He was cornered, and preferred to remain in seeming unconsciousness until he had thought of some method of escape.

The young sport's situation gave him the idea for which he was waiting, and, while Hosmer and Diamond Dick had their backs to him, engaged in the work of rescue, Lattimer arose to his knees and whipped out his knife.

Then he slashed at the cable.

When it parted, the scow swept downstream and the severed ends of the ropes also floated off with the current, but drew toward the respective banks to which they were fastened.

In this way old and young Diamond Dick were whirled away from each other; and when the veteran, realizing who was responsible for the mishap, leaped toward the spot where Lattimer had been lying, he discovered that the rascal had taken to the river and was hanging to the other half of the cable.

The scow, unrestrained in any manner, was spinning around and around in dizzy circles, and Neb Hosmer, mad as a hornet, was jumping up and down on the deck and swearing like a pirate.

"That doesn't help matters any," said old Diamond Dick, out of patience. "Isn't there anything you can do to get the boat to shore?"

Thus admonished, Hosmer gave over his imitation of the army in Flanders, dropped down on the deck and opened a hatch.

After groping about in the darkness for a space, he pulled out a heavy oar and dropped it into an oarlock at the stern.

Then he began sculling, and quickly got the boat steady.

"Blast that Lattimer!" he fumed. "Next time I see him I'll turn loose at him with a forty-five!"

"I don't care what you do to him," said the old veteran. "Get us ashore as quick as you can."

Hosmer was far from being able to do as he wanted to with the unwieldy scow.

Diamond Dick would have preferred landing on the shore toward which Bertie and Nance Hawkins had been swept, but that was out of the question; it was necessary for them to make for the other bank, which was nearest.

And even to gain this bank required a great deal of maneuvering, and the strength of two pairs of arms.

After the scow had been grounded, Diamond Dick scanned the other side of the river for some trace of the young sport, but without avail.

He called to Bertie at the top of his voice, but no answer was wafted back.

"Do ye reckon he an' the gal hev been drowned?" asked Hosmer.

"It isn't possible," the veteran answered. "Young Diamond Dick is one of the best swimmers I ever saw."

"But the gal might hev pulled him down."

"She couldn't have done that."

In spite of Diamond Dick's professed confidence, there was an anxious look on his face as he turned his attention to the steep bank where they had grounded the scow.

The bank, at that point, was rocky and wooded and almost as perpendicular as a wall.

To effect a landing was quite impossible.

Farther down, however, as the old veteran could see, there was a break in the timber, and a straight up and down course which looked like a path.

"What's that, Hosmer?" Diamond Dick asked, pointing.

"Thet's a log chute," replied the ferryman. "They cut a lot o' timber in the lumber camp up above an' shoot it inter the river."

"Aren't the lumbermen working now?"

"They're workin' further back."

"And they're not using the chute?"

"No."

"Then that's the way we must take to get up the bank."

"I can't go no further with ye, Dimun Dick, arter I git ye to the foot o' the chute. I got ter go back an' splice that hawser an' git the ferry in some kind o' shape."

"Very well."

The old veteran remembered what Nance Hawkins had said about the smugglers using a small boat to take them across the river, and he was looking for that boat all the time the scow was being worked to the foot of the log chute.

If he could find the boat, he would go on a hunt for Diamond Dick, Jr., and the girl, and until he did find it he could do nothing in that direction.

When close to the chute, Diamond Dick leaped ashore and started for the steep slide.

It was a concave depression in the earth, some three feet wide and two hundred feet long—the bank at that point being almost a bluff.

Diamond Dick started up, hoping, from an elevated position, to get a better view of the river and thus obtain some clew as to the whereabouts of the young sport.

He had ascended about a dozen feet when a rustle in the undergrowth at the side of the chute brought him to a standstill.

The next moment he saw the blued barrels of seven or eight rifles pushed out through the bushes and a stern voice called:

"Stand where you are, Diamond Dick! Another move in this direction and you're a dead man!"

The voice meant business, there was no denying that, and the old veteran temporarily gave over his climb up the chute.

CHAPTER VI.

HARRY STRIKES THE SLIDE.

Neb Hosmer was nowhere within hail of Diamond Dick, and he could not have been of much service if he had been.

The ferryman was wading upstream, hugging the bank and towing the scow, while Dick had a good start up the chute and was screened by the timber and brush.

If the veteran had yelled to Hosmer he might have brought him, but such a course would only have exposed the ferryman to peril and that without a particle of benefit to any one.

For this reason, Diamond Dick faced the danger alone.

When the muzzles of the guns were thrust through the bushes he counted them carefully.

At first he counted seven, then eight, and finally decided that there were eight smugglers against him.

"Well," remarked Diamond Dick, "what next? I've stopped moving up hill. Do you want me to start down again?"

"I want you to stand right where you are!"

It was the voice of Kench Lattimer, minus the frontier vernacular.

"Show yourself, Lattimer," called Diamond Dick. "I'd like to be able to see whom I'm talking with."

"We'll show ourselves quick enough, and if you want to make a lead mine out of your carcass just try to play one of those dodges for which you're noted."

Lattimer then addressed his men.

"Shove out inter the chute, boys. Watch the ole sockdologer like weasels an' ef he makes a move ye kain't understand, plug him."

When Lattimer finished speaking there was a con-

certed move from both sides of the chute and ten men, instead of eight, appeared.

There were eight of the rank and file, with rifles drawing a bead on Diamond Dick's heart, and then there were Lattimer and Andy Newcomer.

Lattimer was as wet as a drowned rat, and Newcomer had a piece of cloth tied around his neck and in this sling his bandaged right arm was supported.

Both men had suffered at the old veteran's hands, and the looks they cast at him were full of distrust and hate.

"Unbuckle your belt," commanded Lattimer, "and throw it to the side of the chute."

There was nothing for the old veteran to do but to obey, and he did so, at once.

But, all the while, his eyes were traveling about him, and his brain was actively at work.

The outlook, however, was discouraging.

No avenue of escape showed itself.

The river was behind, the steep log chute and the overwhelming force of smugglers in front, and Diamond Dick was, as might be said, between the devil and the deep sea.

Yet, in spite of all this, he did not despair.

Luck would not desert him, for Wade luck was something which could be depended upon.

But, at that moment, old Diamond Dick could not imagine how help was to reach him.

The thing for him to do was to gain time, and about the only way to gain time was by talk.

"We set again, Mr. Newcomer," said Dick, grimly.

"An' the sircumstances aire mighty different," grunted Newcomer. "Ye come mighty near leavin' things yer own way, at the dance hall. Reckon ye'd hev took me but fer ole Bart."

"Old Bart was the fellow who helped you out, then, was he?" Diamond Dick returned, quickly. "Glad to know that. When I get back to Dos Cabezos old Bart will be taken care of."

"Ye'll never git back ter Dos Cabezos, so the information ain't goin' ter do ye any good."

Diamond Dick could see, from the deference with which Kench Lattimer was treated, that he was the chief of the smugglers.

And, from the way Lattimer treated Newcomer, the latter must have been the chief's right-hand man.

"Where's my old pard, Handsome Harry?" queried Diamond Dick.

"He's whar you'll be in a brace o' shakes."

"Where's that?"

"Across the divide," put in Lattimer.

"You mean that you have killed Handsome Harry?"

"Those are the orders I gave, and it's about time the job was pulled off."

"I can't believe it! But, if what you say is true," and Diamond Dick fixed his steel-like gaze on Lattimer's face, "I'll see you on the gallows for it."

"You'll see nobody anywhere," fumed the irate Lattimer. "You and that whipper-snapper son of yours are on my blacklist, along with Handsome Harry. The old Serpent will be put out of the way because he knows too much, but as for you and the young sport—— Well, no man ever yet struck me without paying the penalty."

The old veteran gave the smuggler chief a steady glance and his mustached lip curled in a tantalizing smile.

"Do you remember that old recipe for cooking a hare, Lattimer?" he asked.

"Confound the recipe! What do I care for it? What has it to do with this case?"

"A good deal. It begins something like this: 'First catch your hare.' "

"Well, we've caught Handsome Harry and you."

"Young Diamond Dick is at large, yet, and you haven't got me so fast as you seem to think."

"Curse you! You'll find out."

"What's the use of monkeyin' with him, Kench?" broke in Newcomer, angrily. "Let him hev it an' git it over. He's onter us an' he's about the only enemy we hev ter fear, now that Nixon is laid up. Do fer him an' we'll kerry this big job through without a hitch, an' kin give up the bizness. Now's yer time."

The cool, nervy way in which the old veteran carried himself was irritating to Lattimer, and the chief was more than ready to be persuaded by his lieutenant.

Taking off his hat, Lattimer raised it above his head.

"When I drop this hat, men," he cried, "I want every one of you to pull the trigger. If Diamond Dick lives, he'll call our game and we'll be out several thousand apiece, and, mayhap, spend a time in the pen. If he's put out of the way——"

"You'll all swing," cut in Dick.

"Fire when I drop my hat!" said Lattimer.

The hat was held at arm's length, the smuggler chief, Newcomer and most of his men standing in the log chute, directly in front of old Diamond Dick.

It was a critical moment; in fact, never in the veteran's peril-sown career had the issue of life and death been so manifest.

In the slight pause that followed Lattimer's tragic words, the eight ruffians kept sight of the hat out of the tails of their eyes.

But the hat did not fall as anticipated.

Just as the muscles of Lattimer's uplifted hand began to relax, a wild whoop came booming down from the top of the bluff.

"Dodge fer yer life, Dick! Whoop-ya! The old Sarpint has struck ther slide."

The veteran was electrified.

It was Handsome Harry's voice, and it carried consternation into the ranks of the murderous smugglers.

Following the shot came the burring sound of a log slipping at cannonball speed down the chute. It ploughed into the crowd of smugglers, scattering them on all sides, and apparently crushing two of them.

Diamond Dick, as he leaped to one side, caught a glimpse of the log, throwing up a fine dust like smoke as it tore along, and Handsome Harry down on his hands and knees clinging to it for dear life.

In a flash the log was past and into the river, the old Serpent's voice echoing out behind:

"Gle-ory ter snakes an' greased lightnin'!"

The Californian had made a one-star play that was as daring as it was successful.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY'S ONE-STAR PLAY.

When Diamond Dick had left the Serpent of Siskiyou in the arroyo with the horses, the big Californian felt as though he had been sidetracked; but, as it was to prove with Two-Spot, being switched off in this way was to lead up to a big share in the rough work ahead.

When the revolvers began to pop in the tienda, Harry hitched Diamond Dick's horse to an ironwood tree and spurred forward.

Some one ran past him and dodged across the arroyo.

The Californian instantly drew his forty-four.

"Dick!" he shouted.

But the man was not the old veteran, and Harry did not consider that he had any excuse for shooting.

Presently, however, Diamond Dick came and asked for his horse.

Harry told him the horse was back in the ravine, and then Dick gave his old pard the cue that sent him off on the trail of Newcomer.

The trail was not a difficult one to follow, for it was a moonlight night, and the old Serpent could ride a long way behind and yet keep the dusky forms of horse and rider in direct range of his eyes.

The pace was not at a gallop all the way, and two or three stops, each of considerable length, were made, at as many houses along the road.

During these stops, Harry dismounted and rested his horse; and, at the last stop, he crept close enough to the house which Newcomer had entered, to peer through a window and see his man in animated conversation with another.

This other—although, of course, Harry did not know him—was Kench Lattimer.

Both Kench and Newcomer were excited over something; and they were angry, too, if the way they thumped the table and the angry buzz of their voices could be taken as an indication.

Harry could not hear what they said, and therein lay a great disappointment for him.

At last, when Newcomer jumped up and hurried out of the house, Lattimer ran to the door.

"The round-up of the gang will be across the river, beyond Full-Hand Ferry," he called. "Meet me there. You know the place."

"Sure."

Newcomer was still around the corner of the house, and he had to rush across in front, after Lattimer had closed the door, swing astride his own mount and gallop after Newcomer.

Lattimer heard the clatter of the second set of hoofs, and looked out again.

Instantly his suspicions were aroused, and he flew to the stable, mounted a horse bareback and took after Harry.

So a pretty situation was, in this manner, developed.

Handsome Harry was following Newcomer, and Lattimer was following Handsome Harry.

The upshot of it was that the old Serpent got himself into a box.

Dawn was at hand when the stretch of trail along

the river was reached and more caution was necessary.

Harry, proceeding warily, saw several men join Newcomer and the gang came to a halt in the trail.

Harry also was obliged to halt; and when he heard a beat of galloping hoofs behind him he found it necessary to take to the woods.

He had secured information of importance, and was anxious for some means to communicate with Diamond Dick, at Dos Cabezos.

As he pushed through the timber he came upon the house where Nance Hawkins lived and went in and secured the services of the girl as a messenger.

The girl hurried out to get her horse and then came the attack, as sudden as it was unexpected.

Handsome Harry barricaded the doors and swung to the heavy oak shutters at the windows, and he might have stood off the smugglers until doomsday had they not resorted to a trick.

Lattimer was in command, and he was as resourceful a man as any who ever set the law at defiance.

One of his men had been shot down and another wounded, while charging against the barricaded old war-horse, and Lattimer sent a man post-haste to Hosmer's house for a pound of sulphur.

Mrs. Hosmer was a basketmaker and she used sulphur for bleaching the wythes used in her work.

The sulphur was quickly secured, and the whole of it was dropped down the stove pipe of the house and into the stove on which Nance had been cooking the morning meal.

Instantly the stove was turned into the worst enemy that the big Californian numbered against him.

A board over the top of the chimney threw all the suffocating fumes into the one room the adobe hut contained, and the stove gave off the terrible vapor at every crack and cranny.

It was something that human endurance could not put up with, and Harry was obliged to burst open the door and make a run, revolver in each hand.

Another man fell and another was wounded before the smugglers got him, but ultimately he was captured, roped to a horse and carried away.

Almost blinded by the fumes of sulphur, he was unable to see where he was being taken, and had been loaded into a boat, carried across the river and dragged up a steep hill to a log cabin before he was able to realize much of what was taking place around him.

After reaching the cabin, his feet had been tied, and he was thrown to the floor, and then the door was closed on him and he was left to himself and his reflections.

It may well be surmised that Harry's reflections were not of the rosiest.

He had been sent to trail Newcomer, and he had been captured; true, he had done all that any man could do, but that fact did not alter the result.

The only satisfaction he had was in the thought that Nance Hawkins was no doubt well on the way toward Dos Cabezos, and that the Dicks would soon take a hand.

For a long time, two or three hours at least, the Californian lay in the cabin, straining at the ropes which bound his thick wrists and doing his utmost to free himself.

He had not succeeded in breaking loose up to the time that two of his captors entered the room.

They were not the two who had engineered matters at the time of Harry's capture, the prisoner made sure of that.

"Ef ye got any' prayers ter say," remarked one of the men, gruffly, drawing a knife from his belt, "ye better be sayin' of 'em for'ards, back'ards an' sideways."

"Kase why?" inquired Harry.

"Kase ye're close to a finish."

The man advanced with his knife, and Harry, thinking that was to figure in the "finish," made ready to resist, bound though he was.

The knife was used, but not in the way the old Serpent had expected.

Stooping, the smuggler slashed it through the rope that bound the prisoner's feet.

"Git up," growled the second ruffian, poking Harry in the ribs with a couple of thirty-eights. "An' don't try any shenanigin, kase ye'll shorten yer time by a short spell ef ye do."

The Californian got up and was conducted out of the house into the bright sunlight.

Sweeping his eyes about him, he saw that the cabin was set in the middle of an open space which was covered with stumps and bordered with timber, except on the river side.

There was a heap of logs at the side of the clearing overlooking the river, and this heap was piled conveniently close to a log chute—a contrivance with which Harry was perfectly familiar.

Beside the chute, a yard from the base of the log-

pile, lay a huge oak tree trunk, trimmed and ready for its slide into the waters below, and a subsequent journey downstream to the "boom."

As the prisoner was marched across the cleared space, a dare-devil scheme flashed through his brain.

Five men with rifles in their hands were standing grimly abreast waiting for Harry to be placed in position.

These five, as the old Serpent believed, were the shooting squad.

On reaching the log pile, Harry was ordered to turn around and put his back against it.

"What's yer plan?" queried the Californian, making ready the steel-like muscles of his arms for the desperate deed to come.

"We've planned a quick trip for ye ter kingdom come," said the first ruffian. "Them five boys with guns ary one of 'em kin pick out a squirrel's eye at fifty yards, so I don't reckon it's any ways likely they'll miss ye."

"I'm ter be shot, hey?"

"Thet's the idee."

"Not this mornin'!"

Then, before the ruffian could bat an eye, Harry put the effort of his life into his arms.

The ropes, already weakened by his previous attempts to free himself, gave way under the tremendous force he exerted.

His arms flew out from behind him, and then, like lightning, his fists shot to left and right, and the two smugglers who were standing on either side went heels over head.

This was the first step in Handsome Harry's plan, and it was well taken.

But the tug of war was to come.

Astounded at the dash for freedom, the five smugglers with the rifles stood for a few seconds without lifting a weapon.

And the Californian made the most of these few seconds.

Leaping to the log beside the chute, he rolled it into the depression, gave it a strong push and jumped upon it.

Before the smugglers could fire, log and man were over the brow of the bluff and plunging for the river.

"He's killed himself!" shouted one of the armed men.

"An' saved us the trouble," added a second, and immediately all five hurried to the top of the slide and looked down.

What Handsome Harry saw, as the log began the descent, made his blood leap through his veins.

Old Diamond Dick was below, standing in the center of the slide, apparently in the hands of his foes. Then Harry roared out the words chronicled in the preceding chapter and directly afterwards he was tearing through the crowd of smugglers, flattened out against the log and clinging to it like a leech. It seemed no more than a couple of seconds from the start of that terrific ride until he reached the finish and plunged into the river with a force that sent up a spurt of water ten feet high.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SET-TO ON THE CHUTE.

The sudden advent of the log carried panic into the midst of the smugglers who were threatening the life of old Diamond Dick.

Lattimer dropped his hat, but he did so as he sprang to place himself out of the way of the rushing demon of death.

The smugglers dropped their rifles and threw themselves in every direction.

Two were caught and the lives crushed out of them, and one of these was Newcomer.

Lattimer slipped on the rounded edge of the chute and fell back, the front end of the oak trunk striking him and hurling him for a dozen feet into the brush.

The remaining seven got entirely clear, but they were a badly demoralized seven.

Their Winchesters were gone, several lying in the bottom of the chute, twisted and broken wrecks.

Two, uninjured, were lying on the side of the slide where old Diamond Dick was standing, and he had possessed himself of them in a twinkling.

Another rifle lay near the seven smugglers across the chute and one of them essayed, in a dumb, terrified way, to pick it up.

"Catch it by the muzzle!" cried Diamond Dick, sternly.

The ruffian threw a scared glance across the chute at the old veteran and found him with a Winchester at his shoulder.

"Pick it up by the muzzle, I tell you!" Diamond Dick went on, "and throw it over here."

The fellow hesitated.

"Be about it," the veteran added, "or I'll shoot." That threat settled the question.

The rifle was lifted and thrown, landing at Diamond Dick's feet.

This gave Dick three, all the long-range guns left in the outfit.

But the five men from above were coming down to re-enforce their comrades.

The grawsome spectacle presented by the mangled bodies of their two comrades in the slide had sapped the nerve of the seven, and they huddled together like sheep.

But the remaining five, who were slipping and stumbling down the hill, had their wits about them and were liable, before many moments, to be very much in evidence.

However, aid was also coming for Diamond Dick.

Handsome Harry had separated himself from the log, had paddled ashore, and was now climbing upward and making slow work of it on account of a game leg.

"Hold ther varmints off, pardy!" bellowed the old Serpent; "I'll be with ye in erbout sixty howlin' seconds, an' we'll make ther kibosh complete! Wake up, reptiles, an' tune harps! Tork about yer ha'r-raisin' rides! I've had a trip this mornin' that will live in mem'ry! Hold ther fort, Dicky! I'm a-comin' as fast as this hyer wrenched pin o' mine 'll let me."

The "sixty howlin' seconds" specified by Harry had no more than elapsed when he reached Diamond Dick's side.

"Take two of those rifles, Harry," said the old veteran, "and help me drag that fellow back into the timber where we can make a stand."

"You git inter yore revolver belt, pard," Harry flung back, making for the place where Lattimer was sprawled out unconscious, "an' I'll snake this hyer hombre inter the tall an' uncut all by my lonesome."

While Diamond Dick was picking up his belt and buckling it about his waist, the five smugglers with the rifles turned loose a spattering volley which, fortunately for Dick, did no damage.

For men who could "pick out a squirrel's eye at fifty yards," these marksmen made a poor showing; but their wrought-up nerves may have been responsible for this.

Buckling the belt quickly, the old veteran caught up the third rifle and leaped after Harry, who was now well into the timber with Lattimer.

"There's a fallen tree," said Diamond Dick, quick to sight any means that would assist them in a

defense. "Behind that, old pard, and we'll stand them off."

"What're ye botherin' with this varmint fer?" asked Harry, tossing Lattimer behind the tree and dropping down after him.

"He's the leader of the gang, and we need him in our busiess."

"Leader o' what gang?"

"Smugglers."

"Chink smugglers?"

"No, Harry. The smugglers with whom we have to do, this time, make a specialty of opium."

While this brief talk was being indulged in, the old veteran and the old Serpent were establishing themselves behind their breastworks.

"Mebby he better be roped," suggested the Californian, "ag'inst the time he comes to."

"A good idea," and Harry instantly jerked a red handkerchief from his neck and secured Lattimer's hands behind him.

Then, with another handkerchief taken from Lattimer's pocket, the prisoner's feet were tied.

"Now we've got 'im!" exclaimed Harry, in great satisfaction.

The words were hardly uttered before a bullet plumped into the tree, leading Dick to answer:

"But we'll have to fight for him if we keep him. There are seven against us that I know of."

"And I know of seven more, pardy," murmured Harry, his satisfaction increased, if anything.

"From up the hill?" Dick asked, laying his Winchester across the tree and shooting toward the slide.

He could see no one, and his gun-play had to be at random.

"Thet's whar the other seven 'll come from. This hyer's the clear quill, once more, pardy. What's fourteen? Thet's ten less than a couple o' dozen."

"We may have to yield to mere force of numbers, but we'll stick it out as long as we've got a cartridge left."

"It's the ole Dick of Tarasca, of Comet City, an' of Ouray!" warbled the Californian, who never seemed to realize that he was human and with human limitations. "Durn me fer a short yearlin', Dick, but I got a feelin' that we're goin' ter win out! A feller that kin ride plum out o' the jaws o' death on an oak log was born fer better things than stoppin' a smuggler's bullet."

After that, talk became an impossibility.

Bullets began to fly thickly, coming from invisible foes.

The give-and-take was sharp, but, being a blind fight, the damage wrought was not serious.

The veteran was listening for the sound of the popping guns and the direction from which the sounds came guided him in his shooting.

Suddenly he became aware of something of the utmost importance.

The reports of the enemy's guns indicated that a movement had been inaugurated, further up the steep hillside, with the evident purpose of taking Dick and Harry in the flank and rushing them from a side where there was no tree trunk to shelter them.

"If a miracle doesn't happen," Diamond Dick said, between his teeth, "they'll get us, Harry!"

The unexpected happened, at the critical moment, but it was far from being a miracle.

Some one crashed through the brush from below, in the direction of the river.

"They're surrounding us!" exclaimed Diamond Dick, and Harry lifted his gun and blazed away, down hill.

He was about to shoot again when the form of young Diamond Dick pushed into sight.

"That's enough of that, Harry," cried Bertie. "Your first bullet only missed me by a hair. Put up your rifle and come this way—quick!"

"Jumpin' sandhills!" cried the Californian. "Shootin' at the son of his dad, or I'm a maverick! Ef I'd downed ye, lad, I'd hev turned a shooter ag'inst myself, an'—"

"Let it slide for now," cut in Diamond Dick, Jr. "Come this way."

"What is there over in that way, Bertie?" asked Diamond Dick.

"A boat. Hustle or those chaps will get the lot of us before we can reach it."

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CHAPTER IX.

ON THE RIVER.

It will be remembered that Nance had told of a rowboat, made use of by the smugglers to get themselves and Handsome Harry across the river after the old Serpent had been captured.

This rowboat was the one which the old veteran looked for, but in vain, after Neb Hosmer had landed him from the scow.

There was a very good reason why Diamond Dick could not find the boat, and that was this:

One of the smugglers had rowed the boat back after his comrades had got off.

Bertie, when the hawser was severed by Lattimer, clung to it and was drawn toward the opposite bank.

He hung onto the rope by one hand and supported Nance Hawkins with the other.

Nance had lost her head entirely, and, in spite of Bertie's adjurations to be calm, she struggled wildly.

The girl's struggles made it necessary for Bertie either to let go of her or to let go of the rope.

Those who know the young sport will surmise at once which horn of the dilemma he took.

He dropped the rope, took a hold on the girl which would insure him the freedom of one arm, and finally gained the shore some little distance below the place where Diamond Dick landed on the opposite bank.

This will explain why the old veteran could not see Bertie, and why Bertie could not hear his voice when he called.

The bank where the young sport landed with Nance sloped gently to the water's edge, and they were both tired and bedraggled-looking objects when they dropped down on solid earth in their dripping garments.

"I reckon I made a fool o' myself," mumbled Nance, rubbing the water out of her eyes and giving Bertie a sheepish look.

"That's all right, my girl," young Diamond Dick answered, "you only did what nine women out of ten would have done."

"I kin swim like a fish, but I got all tangled up in my clothes, an' I shore thought I was gone."

"Did Lattimer push you off the scow?"

"I jest reckon he did!" the girl answered, with a flash of the eyes. "I wasn't expectin' nothin' like that, either, so he took me by surprise."

"Why do you suppose Lattimer did that?"

"Mebby he thought I was takin' you an' Dimun Dick over to where the gang was. But ef he thought that push would put me out o' the way he's got fooled, didn't he?"

"Yes, but he made another play that was pretty brilliant when he cut that hawser."

"What's ter be done now?"

"The thing to be done now is to get across the river and try and connect with Diamond Dick. Can

you suggest any way? We might get horses and swim them over."

"But the horses would be no good on t'other side. You remember what I told ye about that scow?"

"Yes."

"Let's go upstream until we git to it. If we can't use that ter take us over, mebby we'll find Neb Hosmer an' he can get across in the ferryboat without usin' the cable."

"Do you feel rested enough to start right out?"

"Sure! I'm as strong as any man I ever see. Come on."

They immediately began pushing up stream, walking as near the edge of the bank as they could.

They saw nothing of Neb Hosmer, nor did they witness Harry's lightning dash down the hill on the log, but they heard the sounds of battle in the chaparral which covered the high bank opposite.

"We must get across!" cried Bertie, desperately. "If I can't do any better I'll swim it."

"You're in good shape ter swim," said Nance, looking at the lithe form of the young sport admiringly, "but you ain't in no shape ter fight."

"That's so," returned Bertie, in a disappointed tone.

He recalled, then, that he was minus his coat, hat and revolver belt, all three of which had been left on the ferryboat.

"But it won't be necessary fer ye ter swim," said Nance, suddenly. "By gosh, there's the rowboat thet the gang used in takin' Han'some Harry over. I thought they'd left it on the other side."

The boat, with oars in the oarlocks, was secured to a tree by a rope.

"This is great luck!" exclaimed Bertie. "Tumble in, Nance, and we'll start across without any more delay than we can help."

Presently they were out in the river and Bertie's sinewy arms were sending the boat broadside on through the strong current.

The reports of firearms guided them, and Diamond Dick, Jr., laid the craft along the opposite shore, directly under the place where the battle was being fought.

"You mind the skiff, Nance," said Bertie, leaping out, "and I'll climb up and investigate."

"Ye won't need ter investigate much ter find out thet old Dimun Dick is in a purty bad hole," Nance answered. "Take my advice an' bring him right

down here so's we can get him across the river an' out of trouble."

"We can't desert Handsome Harry," said Diamond Dick, Jr., and pushed out of sight up the steep hill.

The climb was difficult,

Bertie, however, made use of the brush and pulled himself from point to point, the unexpected shot from Harry apprising him of the fact that he had finally come close to the scene of the battle.

A moment more and he was in sight of the fallen tree which sheltered the two beleaguered fighters, and thereupon followed the rapid-fire conversation already set forth.

The retreat was at once begun, Diamond Dick carrying Harry's two rifles, and the old Serpent, in spite of his game leg, bearing the prisoner in his arms.

When the smugglers found out that their foes were getting away, a charge was made.

The charge was not made quick enough, however, for the Dicks, Handsome Harry and the prisoner were in the skiff and the skiff was several lengths from the shore, when the smugglers got to the water's edge.

Yells of rage and defiance went up from the outlaws, and not a few shots were fired at the skiff and its passengers.

Bertie was at the oars and Diamond Dick and Harry returned the fire of the smugglers to such good advantage that they were forced to retire up the bank.

But this did not end the battle.

The smugglers ran along the steep hillside and continued their shooting.

"Down into the bottom of the boat, Nance!" cried Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Slucks!" answered the girl. "I ain't afear'd."

"Drop down behind the bulwarks, anyway," urged Bertie.

But the girl only tossed her head and remained sitting where she was.

"They're getting the range in good shape," said Diamond Dick, as a bullet plumped against the stock of the rifle he was holding. "Sit up, Lattimer," Dick went on, addressing the chief of the gang, who was lying flat on his back with his eyes wide open. "The sight of you may induce your friends to go a little slow."

Lattimer declined the veteran's invitation, and Harry, who was near him, raised him by main force.

The view of their leader, thus given the smugglers, rather damped their ardor, and the shooting from the bank was perceptibly lessened.

Lattimer wore a black scowl.

The tables had been turned on him and his companions so suddenly and completely that he was fairly crazed with pent-up rage.

While in this condition he saw an opportunity, by the possible sacrifice of himself, to even up scores with the Dicks and he did not hesitate to take advantage of it.

All at once he lifted himself and threw all his weight on the boat's side.

Over the craft went, without a moment's warning, spilling its load into the water and riding bottom up on the surface.

Bertie and Harry did not mind the upset very much, so far as the danger from the water was concerned.

They and the girl had been ducked once before that morning.

The danger, however, was not from the water itself, but from the shore.

A shrill yell greeted the mishap and when Dick and his friends bobbed up, one by one, and caught hold of the boat, the bullets began to spatter about them in a lively manner.

"Where's Lattimer?" asked Diamond Dick.

"I'm hangin' ter him, pard," replied the Californian.

"Don't let loose of him, Harry."

"Ef he goes down I go with him."

The predicament of the Dicks and their companions was perilous in the extreme.

Their rifles were at the bottom of the river, they could not return the fire of their enemies and there was no telling how soon one of them would be picked off. Suddenly there came a wild howl from Harry.

"Gle-ory ter snakes! Look what's comin'!"

At this momentous juncture a big punt, heavily loaded with boxes of merchandise, came racing toward them.

On the stern of the ungainly craft sat Two-Spot, manipulating a steering oar.

"Grab on with your lunch-hooks!" shouted the New York kid, shrilly. "I'm coming right in among you!"

"Catamounts an' hyeners!" sputtered Harry. "It's Deuce Peters, by thunder! An' whar in Sam Hill did he rustle that catamaran?"

CHAPTER X.

TWO-SPOT'S WORK.

As has already been stated, the New York kid was destined to mingle in the lively times which characterized this pursuit of the opium smugglers.

His part of it began about half an hour after the

Dicks had left him to remove the horses to the Hawkin's house.

Two-Spot did not stop to pass any words with Nance's father, but made off as soon as the three animals were safely tethered.

He had a scheme in his head and was anxious to be about it.

His objective point was the scow mentioned by Nance as lying above the ferry.

The boy found it and without very much difficulty.

It was a punt-shaped craft, heavily loaded with packing cases and moored to the bank with a stout rope.

It lay in a sort of natural cove, or arm of the river—a place selected, as it seemed to the boy, with a view to secrecy.

As the New York kid stood at the edge of the bank, sizing up the punt and its cargo, he became suddenly aware that there was a man aboard.

The man was lying on a blanket, spread over some of the boxes, just under the gunwale.

He was busy with a Chinese opium pipe, whiffing at it languidly.

Two revolvers lay on a box just back of his head, removed, probably, so that they might not interfere with the comfort of his reclining posture.

Two-Spot took in the situation in a flash.

And in another flash he had evolved a plan for capturing the boat.

Lowering himself to his knees, he began a stealthy advance on all fours.

When he was within a yard of the punt's bow, the opium smoker heard him and aroused languidly.

"What do you want?" the man asked, fixing his bleared eyes upon the boy.

"These!" and Two-Spot made a jump and secured the weapons.

The man was lying on his elbow, and made a half-start to get up on his feet.

The drug he had been smoking, however, had benumbed his body, brains and muscles, and he was logy in his movements.

"No, you don't, cull," cried Two-Spot. "Down with you, once more."

"Who are you?" mumbled the other.

"I'm the smallest card in the deck, but I get there, now and then, in a way that makes me look ace-high. You be good and there won't be any trigger-play. Get restive and you'll think I've opened on you with a gatling."

"Who are you?" the man demanded again, picking up his pipe. "King of Daliomey or Sultan of Sulu?"

"Gee!" muttered the New York kid; "if you're not bughouse, you're right in the neighborhood."

"I'm the Duke of Monte Carlo, I'll give you to understand, and if you don't look out you'll drive me crazy."

"I wouldn't have far to drive you, neither."

"Want to buy the cargo, Prince?"

The man settled back comfortably and resumed his smoking.

The opium, it was plain, had got into his head and raised havoc with his reason.

"I might go you one on the cargo, Duke," returned Two-Spot. "What have you got aboard?"

"One thousand pounds of prepared opium, your highness."

Two-Spot gave a jump.

"G'wan, you're stringin' me."

"Nay, I give it to you straight, my liege. In Chinatown 'tis worth \$16 the pound. One thousand pounds at \$16 a pound means \$16,000. Dost follow me?"

"I dost. Where did you get all this stuff, Duke?"

"I helped friend Lattimer smuggle it over the border."

"Friend Lattimer is the main squeeze?"

"He is chief of the smugglers."

"Then this opium never paid duty."

"Uncle Sam got not a red. Want to buy it?"

"I'll take it under consideration."

"Then kindly allow me to smoke myself to sleep while you're considering."

"Go ahead, Duke. Smoke up. Don't let me bother you."

Two-Spot sat there watching the man like a hawk until the pipe fell from his hands, his head dropped back, and he took his little trip to the opium fiend's paradise.

It required some time for this result to be brought about, and while it was coming on there were all kinds of noises wafted from down the river. But the principal noise, and the one which stirred the New York kid the most, was the continued firing.

He heaved a long breath of relief when the Duke lost his senses.

"Now, Duke," muttered Two-Spot, stepping softly from the punt and untying the painter, "if you'll kindly pound your ear for the next hour I won't ask anything more of you. I'm going to swipe this cargo of dream stuff, and get it into the hands of the Dicks."

A brief search enabled the boy to find a steering oar, and he sculled the punt out of the cove and into the swift current of the stream.

The Duke lay like a dead man and never made the slightest move.

At this juncture, the New York kid's idea as to what he should do with the punt and its load of opium was rather hazy.

His main object was to get the craft and cargo away from the spot where they had been hidden by the smugglers and to hide them in another place of which only he himself should know.

When he rounded the bend in the river, however, and his astonished eyes took in the scene that lay before him, his indefinite plan was quickly changed.

He headed straight for the overturned boat and drew in the steering oar while he assisted those in the water to clamber aboard.

"Gle-ory ter snakes an' brain-twisters, Spotty!" exclaimed the old Serpent. "Whar did ye git holt o' this boat?"

"It's the boat that belongs to the smugglers," put in Nance.

"Is it the one you saw, Nance?" queried Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Yes."

"You got here just in time with it, Two-Spot," said old Diamond Dick. "It must be loaded with provisions."

"Nit. Guess again."

"Ammunition?" hazarded Bertie.

"Sure, a thousand pounds of it; ammunition for those dinky pipes they use for smoking."

"Opium?" asked Diamond Dick.

"That's it—\$16,000 worth, so the Duke says."

"The Duke?"

"That's his nibs, under the starboard gunnel. He's been smoking up and that's why he's not sociable."

Amazement was general, and Two-Spot was asked to tell what his experiences had been.

"I guess we'd better make a landing before I throw that at you, hadn't we?" said the New York kid. "There's some one on the bank, over there, who's trying to flag us."

The firing by the smugglers had ceased entirely, and the Dicks and their friends, following with their eyes the boy's pointing finger, saw a man on horseback waving his hat.

"It's Del Roy!" exclaimed Diamond Dick.

"What's he doing out here?" muttered Bertie.

"I don't know, but it won't take long to find out. Make a landing as close to Del Roy as you can, Two-Spot."

Two-Spot sent the head of the punt into the sand within a yard of where the Mexican's horse was standing.

"You're rather a wet-looking lot of Americanos," said Del Roy, with the flicker of a smile about his bearded lips.

"Ef you'd been whar we hev," returned Harry, "you'd be wet, too."

"What's the matter, Del Roy?" Diamond Dick inquired.

"Nothing, except that I have got six well-mounted and well-armed men back here in the timber. Nixon wouldn't rest easy until I had collected the force and galloped after you. He knew you would come up with the smugglers, and Nixon thought we might be needed."

"That was thoughtful of Nixon," replied Diamond Dick, "and I don't know but your arrival has saved the day for us. There are fourteen smugglers across

the river, and your force may be necessary to hold them in check while we unload this punt and get the cargo into Dos Cabezos."

"What's in the boxes?"

"A thousand pounds of prepared opium that didn't go through the custom house!"

"Diablo!" exclaimed Del Roy. "A fine haul. And who's the prisoner?"

"Kench Lattimer, the chief of the gang. He's an old hand hereabouts. I should think you'd know him."

"I've heard of him, but I don't know him even by sight. Andy Newcomer is the man I had hoped you would capture."

"Andy will never be captured."

"I'm afraid not. He's a dare-devil, and it seems impossible to get him into so tight a corner that he can't slip out. With him and Lattimer out of the way I'm sure these smuggling operations would cease."

"We'd have captured Newcomer if it had been possible."

"I am positive of that."

"But he's dead, and—"

"Dead?" echoed Del Roy.

"Yes."

"Cospetto!" Del Ray laughed. "No wonder he can't be captured. Nixon said the gang was working out some big deal, and that was the reason Newcomer took such chances in trying to get him out of the way. The smugglers didn't want to be interfered with."

"Well, this cargo comprises the merchandise that figured in the deal. If we take the cargo, and the chief smuggler, that leaves the gang high and dry, doesn't it?"

"I have no doubt. Have you seen old Bart?"

"Haven't set eyes on him. I wouldn't know him, however, if I had."

"He has fled from Dos Cabezos. That barrel in the wall proved his undoing."

"How?"

"People began to think of men with money who had gone to the tienda to play monte and had never been heard of again. Suspicion became aroused, and old Bart took time by the forelock and pulled out, selling his stock of goods to the man who was clerk-ing for him."

"Old Bart, then, had probably saved his scalp. I wonder if that ferryman has a wagon."

"Yes."

"Then the thing to do is to have him hitch to the wagon and come down here and load up with these boxes."

"I'll go and tell him to come," said Nance.

"All right, my girl," returned Dick. "You go with her, Two-Spot, and bring Nick-o'-the-Night and Bear-Paw."

"On the lope," replied the New York kid.

After Nance and Two-Spot had gone, Del Roy whistled a signal and summoned his half-dozen men.

They were a sturdy-looking lot, and equal to three times their number of smugglers, as the old veteran judged.

With their help, the boxes were tumbled ashore.

In order to unload, it was necessary to awaken the Duke.

He was still dealing in Princes and Sultans and others of the nobility, and there was no difficulty whatever in making him a prisoner.

Diamond Dick opened one of the cases to reassure himself, and found that it was filled with jars containing the manufactured drug, just as the Duke had informed the New York kid.

In less than two hours Neb Hosmer drove up his wagon and the smuggled goods were loaded upon it.

Lattimer and the Duke were loaded with the goods and Handsome Harry climbed up and seated himself in front of them, "jest ter see that they don't make a break," as he explained it.

Harry was minus the horse he had ridden out from Dos Cabezos, and, aside from the fact that he could watch the prisoners, he preferred to ride in the wagon rather than to ride double with Two-Spot on the latter's mount.

Del Roy and his six men acted as escort to the wagon and prisoners, and Bertie, Diamond Dick, Two-Spot and Nance Hawkins galloped into town ahead of the rest.

The old veteran insisted that the girl should go with them, and she readily consented, doffing her wet garments and putting on dry ones when she went home after her horse.

Nance was a plucky girl, had been of service during the expedition against the smugglers, and Diamond Dick thought she deserved a reward.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

None of the smugglers put himself in evidence during the return to Dos Cabezos, and the journey was safely made, both by the Dicks and their friends, who went ahead, and by the wagon and its convoy.

Diamond Dick, Bertie, Two-Spot and Nance reached the settlement an hour before the wagon arrived.

They made at once for Del Roy's house, and when the Dicks and Nance went in, the New York kid led the horses to the stable and cared for them.

"What!" exclaimed Nixon, from his cot in the sitting-room. "Are you back again, Diamond Dick?"

"That's what we are, Nixon," laughed the old veteran, "a little damp and uncomfortable, but otherwise feeling tolerably good."

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had no success?"

"What makes you think that?"

"You haven't been gone long enough to do anything. You only left here this morning."

"Early this morning, Nixon."

"And the sun is an hour high yet," the detective continued, giving a glance through a window.

"You are evidently unfamiliar with the ways the Diamond Dicks have of doing things," the veteran returned.

"What have you done?" queried Nixon. "If you've accomplished anything, even a little, it will be the best kind of a tonic for me."

"Well, then, what would you say if I told you we had captured a thousand pounds of opium?"

"A thou—— Oh, see here, Dick, that's drawing it pretty strong."

"It's the truth, nevertheless."

"Do you really mean to say that you have captured a thousand pounds of opium away from the smugglers?"

"Yes. The stuff is coming in a wagon and Handsome Harry and two prisoners are coming with it."

"And you captured a couple of prisoners, too!"

A jubilant look began to overspread Nixon's face. But he half hesitated to believe, as yet.

The news was too good to be true.

"Yes," laughed Diamond Dick, "two prisoners."

"Is Andy Newcomer one of them?"

"No."

A shade crossed Nixon's brows.

"Couldn't get him, eh?"

"He's dead, Nixon."

"Sure of it?"

"If you don't believe me you can ask Harry when he arrives."

"I believe you, of course. But who are the prisoners?"

"The chief of the gang and one of his followers—a drug-debauched individual who was out of his senses when I saw him."

"Who is the chief of the gang?"

"A fellow named Kench Lattimer."

"I know Lattimer. A double-dyed scoundrel, if there ever was one. He's a dealer in bogus mines——"

"I know that," put in Diamond Dick, Jr.

"And this smuggling game, I suppose, was carried along on the side."

"However it was carried on, Lattimer was into it all the time, and clear up to his eyes."

"Give me the details of the whole business, Diamond Dick," said Nixon. "You and your pals have done wonders, and I'll bet the recital will be thrilling enough."

"There was a lot of rough work about it——"

"As rough as any we ever tackled," admitted Diamond Dick, Jr.

"But before we sit down to go through the deal with you, Nixon," the old veteran continued, "we ought to have a chance to dry our clothes."

Bertie did not look very damp.

It will be recalled that he had left his hat, coat and revolver belt on the ferryboat.

These articles had been returned to him by Neb Hosmer, and Bertie had loaned the belt to Harry for possible use on the wagon.

Mrs. Del Roy built a roaring fire in the Mexican fireplace, in the sitting-room, and then retired with Nance Hawkins, while Bertie and Diamond Dick stripped and dried their garments thoroughly.

During the operation, Nixon was let into all the facts, and, as he listened, his wonder grew.

"No one but the Dicks and their pals could have carried such a game through to a successful finish!" he exclaimed, when all was told. "I don't know how I can pay you for what you have done——"

"That's all right," cut in the old veteran; "we had to do our share because the railroad was involved. You understand that?"

"But this girl, Nance, ought to be substantially remembered."

"Certainly, and that is something you can and ought to do. It was for that reason that I brought her to Dos Cabezos with us."

The smugglers were never afterwards heard from in the vicinity of Dos Cabezos and Full-Hand Ferry.

The two captured men and the smuggled opium were delivered to the custom's officers, the latter confiscated, and the former tried and duly sentenced.

Nance was rewarded so liberally for her work that she was able to take her invalid father to the Hot Springs, near Phoenix, and the baths entirely cured him of his rheumatism and he again went into the woods as a lumberman.

Old Bart Garcia never reappeared in Dos Cabezos, and it was very well for him that he did not.

Had he shown up, he would have been waited on by a delegation of citizens with a coil of rope.

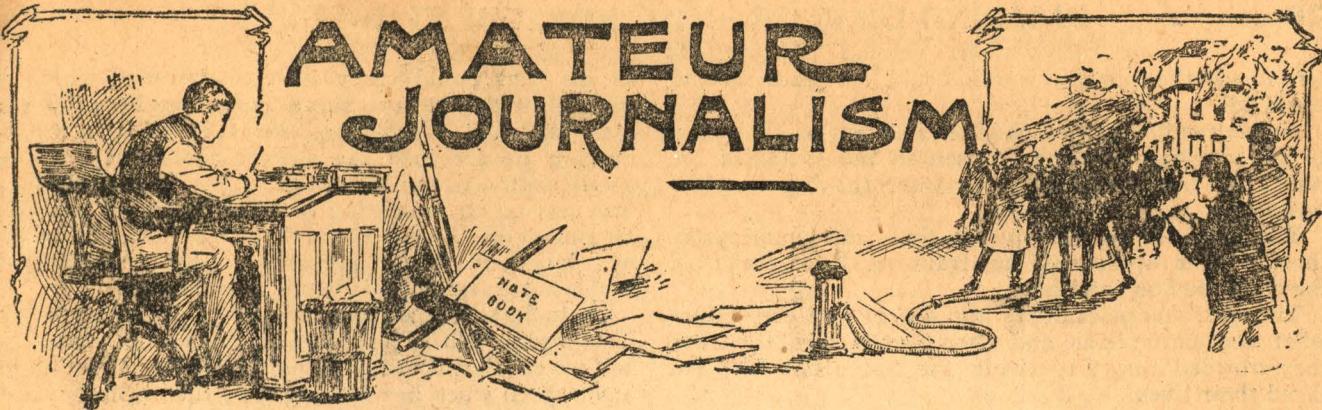
The Dicks, as soon as Harry got into Dos Cabezos and had made himself comfortable in dry clothing and secured another horse, started for Ouray, at which place they arrived in due course.

And it was with a great deal of satisfaction that Diamond Dick, Jr., sent a report to the Eastern capitalists which stated that the mine in the Mogollon Mountains was "N. G.," and a proposition which they would do well to let severely alone.

THE END.

The next issue (No. 289) will contain, "Diamond Dick and the Black Dwarf; or, Hot Work for Uncle Sam." Hot work, and plenty of it. What the Dicks are well accustomed to. The Black Dwarf was a new discovery to them, and an interesting one.

AMATEUR JOURNALISM



"Wake up, snakes, and warble fer a hot finish!"

The last week of the contest has opened, boys. You've got to get your entries in quick, or not at all. Chase 'em along. It's been a great contest. Let it wind up with a sprint.

How Tom Got the Robbers.

(By James Holland, New York.)

Tom Haines was a bright, handsome lad of sixteen. He lived in the little town of Jackson, and was an all-round athlete, and was stronger than any boy in Jackson.

The bank of Jackson had been robbed and nothing could be found of the robbers, although some of the best detectives were on the case.

No clew could be found. Ten thousand dollars had been offered by the authorities of the village.

"I would like to capture those fellows," said Tom, one night. "I would like to get the money."

"What would you do with so much money?" asked his father.

"I would like to go to college," said Tom. "But I think I will have to wait quite a while before going."

That night Tom's father sent him to the village for some groceries that were needed.

There were quite a few boys around, so Tom had to stay a while and play with them.

It was quite late when he started for home so he thought he would take a short cut.

He was walking slowly through a little wood and was not making much noise when he came suddenly upon two rough-looking fellows. They were so engrossed in their conversation that they did not see Tom. Tom would have passed on, when he heard one fellow say:

"We won't have to do no more jobs until that swag we got from Jackson is all used up."

"Well," said the second, "it will be a long time before we will have it used up. There are five of us, and we each get ten thousand apiece. It was a great haul."

"When is ther captain going to divide ther swag?"

"Next Tuesday night in that old cave just beyond this woods. Let's go where ther gang is, we are missing all the fun."

They arose and went away.

"Well," said Tom to himself, "I think I will get that ten thousand if nothing happens."

He ran all the way home, told his father what he had heard, and then rushed down to the village and told the president of the bank. The president then told the

sheriff to have a dozen men surround the cave on the next Tuesday night.

The next Tuesday night came, and if you had been there you could have seen men stealing quietly up to the edge of the cave.

Suddenly a loud cry came from the mouth of the cave. Then a fight began, pistols cracked, shotguns boomed, and for an hour you could hear nothing but the crash and roar of guns and pistols.

Of a sudden the firing ceased, and a voice from the cave cried:

"We surrender."

Out of the cave marched five men. They were quickly handcuffed, and taken away to jail.

Tom Haines received the ten thousand dollars. He gave one thousand to the sheriff to be divided among the men who helped capture the robbers.

Tom is now in college.

How a Brave Boy Saved a Train.

(By Otto Heckman, Cal.)

The heroism and presence of mind of Harry Colin, a boy thirteen years old, once saved a passenger train with a hundred souls aboard, who did not dream of the terrible disaster which threatened them, from certain death. Between Latrobe and White Rock there is a cut in the hills which is preceded by a steep grade and it is the practice of the engineers to run at full speed through the cut in the hills.

Harry, who lived in the neighborhood, happened on top of one of these hills, and he noticed there had been a landslide during the night.

It had been raining hard for three days, which probably caused it, and fully fifteen tons of earth and boulders had choked up the pass and covered the tracks.

The boy knew that the train from Placerville was due here any moment, that the engineer could not see the obstruction until too late on account of the curve on the track, so thinking only of the terrible loss of life it would cause, and that he must do something, he half slid, half tumbled, down the steep bank to the track.

Jumping up, with all his speed he ran up the track,

for already the roar of the train could be heard around the bend.

He had pulled his red handkerchief out of his pocket as he ran, and planting himself in the middle of the track, the brave boy began to wave the handkerchief furiously.

The engineer saw him just in time, and jamming the throttle shut he stopped the train not three feet from the brave boy on the track.

The passengers came piling out of the cars to see what the matter was, and when they learned the truth they crowded round to thank the brave boy who had saved their lives.

A commercial drummer then said:

"Let's get up a purse for the kid."

And ten minutes later Harry was on his way home with enough money to buy a new bicycle for himself, and as happy a boy in the knowledge of having saved so many lives as ever lived.

A Runaway Incident.

(By Lee Pollock, Indiana.)

Harry Sherman, an honest, good-hearted boy of about fourteen years, lived with his mother and three little brothers on the outskirts of a small village which lay at one end of a small lake.

His home was an old, weather-beaten house of three rooms, but it served them better in their situation than a mansion.

Harry's father had died about two years before, leaving his family in a bad condition. He was only a day laborer, having never learned a trade of any kind, and had never received a steady job for any length of time. The family depended wholly upon him, which took every cent he could rake and scrape. His death was a hard blow to the family. The success of the family was left mostly to Harry—the oldest son.

Harry started out like his father, doing everything and anything to bring in a little money honestly for the family. He would do anything that the people wanted done, running errands, work at any odd jobs he could find, and catching fish, and selling them, which was his favorite work. Harry was very good in the fishing business, and always brought home a large string of fish. His mother would select what fish the children liked best, and then Harry would take the rest to the village and sell them and hand the money to his mother.

One bright warm spring evening Harry took his fishing rod from its place on the side of the house, got his bucket and bait, then went and told his mother where he was going, started for the lake, where he had a small yawl moored.

He sprang into the boat lightly, picked up the oars and headed her up the lake toward the fishing grounds, which were about two miles from his home. The old yawl was soon there under his swift, steady stroke. The boat was made fast to the bank, and Harry took his seat in the stern, took the bait from the locker, baited his hook, cast out his line, and sat waiting patiently for the first signs of a bite.

Suddenly he was startled by a woman crying:

"Help! help!"

Harry was out of the boat in a bound and ran as fast

as his legs could carry him to the road which ran parallel with the lake shore about two hundred yards from the lake. Harry was over the fence in a leap and looking up the road saw a horse coming at breakneck speed, with a young lady in the buggy behind it. Harry was very quick in making up his mind when necessary. He pulled off his coat as quick as possible, and picking up a large club which lay near by, he ran toward the flying horse, waving his hands over his head.

He had go within about thirty feet of the horse when it stopped with a jerk, which threw the young lady against the dashboard very hard, and was about to leap in the ditch when he was caught by the bridle by Harry. He found the horse to be a tough customer.

Harry found the lady to be the daughter of Mr. Walker, the wealthiest man of the village, and owning a large store. Harry, seeing she was very weak, and pale, and was very badly scared, got into the buggy and drove off to the village, where she was received by tender hands.

Her mother tried to thank Harry, but could not for weeping.

Harry took the horse around to the barn, where he put it up, and was returning to go home when he was met by Mr. Walker, who gave him a warm grip, which Harry understood. He was then asked to follow him. He followed him to the office, where Mr. Walker sat down at his desk, wrote a while, then putting the paper in an envelope accompanied with a fifty-dollar bill, which Harry did not see, handed it to the boy, telling him to give it to his mother. His mother read the letter and then handed it to Harry, who read it with a pleasing smile.

He read as follows:

"Come to the store in the morning, steady work as clerk, five dollars a week, and prospects of more."

Harry danced all over the house, whooping with joy.

A Merciful, Bald-headed Bear.

(By Alfred Kennedy, Col.)

In the region of Montrose, Colorado, a large grizzly bear had been annoying some of the farmers. He was a cunning bear in some ways. He knew what a gun was and always kept one at its distance. But a man unarmed could get close enough to almost touch him, until he had received a few pistol shots, though without effect other than to sting him.

He had a large white spot in his forehead and therefore received the name of Baldy. Now the people thought that they must get rid of this bear, and for that reason two sportsmen came to earn the reward that the farmers offered for him.

In October, 1898, they started off to try their luck. As fate would have it, they found him quicker than was expected. On rounding a hill they heard a low growl which made their horses shy. Not very far off they saw a large, shaggy gray object with a white spot in its forehead. "There he is, Tom!" shouted one of the two, leveling his rifle. He fired, but being excited, he missed his mark, only wounding the bear.

"Look out, George, he is after you!" yelled Tom, and before he could fire the bear was upon George and his horse. Tom was afraid to fire for fear of hitting his part-

ner, and went to work with his clubbed rifle, but it had little more effect than a straw. By this time George was completely unconscious, and the bear made for Tom, who made for a tree, but the bear overtook him, and soon had him done up.

George, who recovered first, sat up, rubbed his eyes and tried to recall what had happened. His gaze fell on the horses a little way off and then he remembered all. He looked around for Tom and had the satisfaction of seeing him sitting up and feeling his scratches and bruises.

"I'll never hunt for another bear as long as I live," exclaimed Tom, "for that is the first time I ever knew that one had enough human heart in him to spare a fellow's life when he had him down."

They got their horses and made their way to town, where they had their wounds dressed. Tom Barlow and George Linden bear the scars of that fight to this day and so far Tom has kept his promise of never hunting bear.

The Wreck.

(By Geo. T. Davis, Ind.)

It was about one o'clock that our train stopped and switched off on a side track at a little village twenty miles west of Little Rock, Ark.

We were coming from Oklahoma and had come all right until we came to a halt at the little village.

We got off the train and looked down the track. There about a quarter of a mile off stood a freight train. We went down and there we saw that two cars had fallen down an embankment about fifteen feet. One car was loaded with canned goods and the other with molasses. Nearly all the barrels were burst and the molasses ran down a ditch.

It appeared that in a few minutes every negro in that section of the country knew of the wreck of the molasses. They came armed with buckets and got to work.

Some ate out of the barrels. One negro got eight two gallon buckets full of the molasses.

While this was going on the wreck train got there and was clearing up the wreck. It was about six o'clock when we pulled out.

The negroes in that vicinity won't have to buy any molasses soon.

A Terrible Adventure with a Lioness.

(By Pearl Miller, Ohio.)

Last vacation I went to visit my uncle, who lived in the northern part of Michigan. I had already provided myself with a good Winchester rifle, for I thought it would be great sport to go hunting in that wild region.

One very dark night we went about three or four miles from the place where my uncle lived. In a little while after we reached the forest it began to rain very hard. We did not care much about the rain, but as we were mounting a very steep hill it began to thunder and lightning, and by the time we reached the top four or five trees had been struck not very far away. We were now wet to the hide. There was a large boulder not very far away from where we were now standing, so

uncle told me to go behind it for shelter, and that he would go a little farther and then come back.

I went over behind the boulder and found a large cave. I stepped inside to get out of the rain, and as I did so I heard a roar. I was startled, for I knew it to be the roar of a lion.

I looked back in the darkness of the cave and saw something that looked like two balls of fire coming toward me. I stood my ground, but did not think to shoot, for I confess that I was scared. I called to uncle, but he did not come.

I felt the hot breath of the lion on my face, it leaped upon me and bore me to the ground, when—bang! I saw my uncle's figure standing at the mouth of the cave. His shot did not take effect in one way, but it did in another. It called the attention of the lion for an instant. Now was my only time, and, quicker than tongue can tell it, I fired.

We heard a roar and a terrible tearing up of earth. I was on my feet in an instant, and out of the cave. We waited until morning, for it had stopped raining, and when it was light enough to see we went back to the cave with rifles ready for instant use. But we did not have to use them; for, half covered with torn up earth lay a large lioness—dead!

We went into the cave a little farther, and found two good-sized cubs, which uncle let me shoot. We skinned our game and went home. We went hunting many other times while I was there, but never had such an adventure as we had that night.

A Hero.

(By Matthew Place, Tenn.)

Tom Johnson was only a poor lad of sixteen years of age. His father and mother were both dead, so he had to work real hard to earn a living.

This he did by selling newspapers and doing odd jobs.

The *Sun*, which was a paper published in the town in which he lived, put up a bicycle to be won by the boy selling the largest number of copies in a certain time. Tom won the wheel.

As it was Sunday, and he was through selling his papers, he got out his wheel and started to take a ride.

He had just got on his wheel and started when some one yelled to him to look out. He quickly turned his wheel around and saw a runaway horse and carriage bearing down on him.

The carriage contained two young girls. One of them was about to jump when Tom cried out to them that he would save them.

The horse and carriage were now about a hundred yards in front of him.

He went as fast as he could and was soon at the rear wheels of the carriage.

Inch by inch he crept up and was soon at the horse's head.

He then sprang up and got hold of the bridle. The shock pulled him off his wheel.

He clung bravely to the horse's head and was dragged several blocks, but finally stopped the runaway.

He was very badly hurt, but when he recovered he was given a new wheel, a hundred dollars and, best of all, a fine position.

A Tramp with a Telephone—A True Story.

(By Guy H. Lawrence, Mass.)

The captain of the police station had just disposed of a number of tramps for the night when a man about forty years old came in, saying that he had a telephone running up his back from his heels to his ears to tell him when his enemy was after him.

"Want to hear me story?" he asked, and the captain said he did.

"My enemy," he said, "has followed me around the world, and has given me no peace of mind since 1702, when he knocked me off of the capitol at Washington, D. C. Next he found me in Boston, 1709, when he shot me in the neck, but didn't kill me because me neck is made of rubber. I then ran all the way to San Diego, California, where him and me had a duel, and I cut his ears off.

"I then shipped aboard a ship going to China. He met me there, 1801, and gave me over to the Boxers. They tried to cut my head off, but I escaped them and went to Japan, where he found me in 1805. I tried to run away in a boat, when he shot a hole in it. Just as it was sinking the whale that swallowed Jonah came along and took me in and here I am."

The story teller had begun to stare wildly around when the captain pressed the bell to call in the officers. The bell rang and the man yelled:

"Hello, hold the line and I will be in Chicago in two seconds." Then he fainted away.

A doctor was called, and he said it was a bad case of jimmams caused by drink.

This story is given as told by the captain of the station.

LETTER FROM A PRIZE WINNER.

Here's a good letter from a genuine Diamond Dick boy—Eric Harold Palmer. Of course you know him by the story he entered in the last contest, and with which he won a prize.

262 St. Mark's Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Editor Diamond Dick Weekly—

Dear Sir: It is with much pleasure that I acknowledge the receipt of the books I won during the recent Amateur Journalism Contest. I thank you heartily and wish Diamond Dick all good luck. Street & Smith's publications have always been, and will always be, my favorite. Thanking you again, I remain,

Very respectfully yours,
March 15, 1902. ERIC HAROLD PALMER.

More power to your elbow, Eric. Thanks for your good wishes. We want to please such boys as you, for you are the best judge.

Write again.



DO YOU WANT TO BE AN AUTHOR?

HAVE YOU BEEN reading the thrilling stories that have appeared in the contests going on in the **DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY** recently? You were interested in them; were you not? They were all written by readers of **DIAMOND DICK** such as you are. Do you know any thrilling stories or interesting incidents? If you do you should enter the present

PRIZE CONTEST

you have a good chance of securing a prize. Over one hundred boys have secured prizes in the last two **DIAMOND DICK** Contests. In the present Contest there are

FIFTY PRIZES.

Here Are Full Directions:

Take any incident you can think of. It may be a fire, a runaway, an accident, an adventure, or even a murder. It doesn't matter whether you were there or not. Write it up as graphically as you can, make it full of "action," and send it to us. The articles should not be over 500 words in length. The Contest closes **MAY 1**. Send in your stories at once, boys. All the best ones will be published during the progress of the Contest. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

HERE ARE THE PRIZES:

THE FIVE BOYS who send us the Most Interesting and Best Written "Stories" will each receive ten books, which they will select from the list published in **No. 278**. These books include the finest and most interesting boys' stories ever published.

THE TEN BOYS who send in the next best "Stories" will each receive any four books they may select from the list in **No. 278**.

THE FIFTEEN BOYS who send us the next best "Stories" will each receive any three books they may select from the list in **No. 278**.

THE NEXT TWENTY BOYS will receive any two books they may select from the list in **No. 278**.

To become a contestant for these prizes cut out the Amateur Journalism Coupon printed herewith; fill it out properly, and send it to **DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY**, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your "story." No story will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

Diamond Dick Weekly Amateur Journalism Contest No. 8.

Date..... 1902

Name.....

City or Town.....

State.....

Street and No.

Title of Story.....



THRILLING SEA STORIES

THE LOST TALISMAN.

By ROGER STARBUCK.

Mr. Robert Normond, a ship-owner of New Bedford, was a gentleman universally respected. His affections, after the death of an amiable, loving wife, were centered in his son, William—a wild, daring youth, famed from boyhood for feats of bravery and strength.

He was a good-hearted lad, somewhat wilful, it is true, but never opposing his father, whom he liked for many reasons.

Living under the latter's roof was a mean, good-for-nothing scamp, named Benjamin Hatch, the ship owner's nephew, whom he had taken when the child was left an orphan, at the age of three years. Benjamin was now grown to a dissipated youth of nineteen, who was forever studying how he could contrive to obtain the greater portion of his uncle's money when Normond should be carried off by that dreaded disease, consumption, which for some years had crippled his strength.

He knew that his uncle, despising his profligate ways, would not leave him much—in fact, the ship-owner had told him so on more than one occasion.

William Normond, the son, wanted to go to sea; but his father withheld his consent until the boy's eighteenth year, when he permitted him to ship before the mast on the whaler *Dolphin*, Captain Trueman.

Just before the vessel was ready to sail Mr. Normond took his son aside.

"I have consented to your going to sea because I think it will be good for you, make you stronger and more manly. The ship will be gone three years, at the least, by which time I feel a presentiment, I shall be no more. I will leave my whole fortune in trust to my friend, Lawyer Biggs, who, the moment you present him with this talisman, will put you in possession."

The talisman which Mr. Normond gave to his son was a valuable diamond ring, worth many thousands of dollars—a family heirloom, which had passed through many different hands.

William looked at the ring as he placed it on his finger, and was almost dazzled by its brilliancy.

"You had better not wear it," suggested Mr. Normond, "as you may in that case lose it. Keep it safe somewhere—preserve it carefully, for the losing of it might give you considerable trouble in obtaining your money. In fact, you might, if you should part with this

jewel, never succeed in getting the fortune. Mr. Biggs, who has never seen you—who, in fact, has not yet arrived from his tour in Europe—could not give you a cent unless you should present the diamond, which I shall describe to him as the sign by which he may know who you are. My reason for adopting this method, instead of making a regular will, is that I fear the cunning of my nephew, who might contrive to steal the document, or obtain it in some underhand way. I have known him to perform tricks of almost superhuman cunning, and my last words to you are these, that you must look out for him."

"Ay, ay," answered Will; "but perhaps you think Benjamin worse than he really is."

Mr. Normond, however, shook his head in the negative, and having repeated his caution, parted with his son.

On the next morning the *Dolphin* put out to sea. Away she went bowling merrily along, finally plunging her bows into the Atlantic. William was learning the names of some of the ropes from an old, gray-headed tar, when he beheld, emerging from the cabin, one of the loveliest young creatures he had ever seen. This person, who was the captain's sister, he subsequently learned, was about sixteen years old. She was tall and sylph-like, but well rounded, with a step like Juno's, and soft clear brown eyes that seemed to look right into your heart, with that mild, truthful expression difficult to describe.

Next day William being at the wheel, felt the girl's robe brush against him as she moved toward the lee side of the deck. That mere touch of her dress made the young man thrill all over, and as he met her eyes his own cheeks seemed to reflect the blush upon hers. With his mind full of her attractions, he reached forward, when what was his surprise to see his cousin Benjamin emerge from the forecastle.

"Well met!" Benjamin exclaimed, laughing. "I heard you were going to sea, Bill, and I took a notion that I would take a trip with you. Knowing that uncle would not have consented, I thought, after shipping, that my best plan would be to do as I have done—remain concealed in the hold until the vessel was well out to sea."

William was not overpleased with the meeting. Still, he had nothing against his cousin, who had always seemed friendly enough to him. The two resolved to mess and bunk together, and Benjamin proposed that they should stand by each other through everything.

Benjamin was not long in discovering that Bill had fallen in love with Miss Trueman, the captain's sister; that the two, pleased with each other's society, would frequently converse on the quarterdeck. Ben, secretly jealous, loving the girl himself (as well as he was capable of loving) vainly endeavored to ingratiate himself in her favor. She had conceived an involuntary dislike toward him from the first.

"Bill," whispered Benjamin to his cousin, one evening, "I would not advise you to get too thick with the cap's sister. She has heard you will be rich and is after your money."

"How do you know that, sir?" inquired Bill, indignantly.

"I am sure of it. I overheard her say to her brother that you were rich."

"That proves nothing. Let me hear no more of this," he added, sternly.

He had himself informed the girl that he would have plenty of money at some future time—had even told her about the diamond ring. He remembered having seen her eyes brighten and her cheeks flush at the time, but he then had thought nothing of it.

Now, however, the poison dropped into his mind by his cousin began to work. Suspicion, hitherto scarcely ever troubling him, clouded his spirit.

Soon after the girl, with ready intuition, divined his thoughts from some words which escaped him while in her presence. Her brown eyes flashed, tears came to them—she gave him one look, then, with stately walk, swept into the cabin.

"Miserable little bauble," muttered Bill, sadly, an hour after, as he leaned across the lee rail, and, full of deep grief, eyed the ring, "thou art the cause of all my trouble. She will never speak to me again. I have lost her love forever."

At this time the ship lay becalmed. There was not a breath of air, and the sails hung loosely against the masts. Bill remained dreamily gazing down into the still waters, when some person jostling his arm rudely, the ring dropped from his hand into the sea!

He turned to behold his cousin.

"A curse upon my awkwardness!" exclaimed Benjamin. "What was that you dropped?"

Without replying, Bill, throwing off his jacket and pumps, jumped into the sea.

With him dove another—Benjamin, who had also divested himself of his shoes and jacket.

He well knew what Bill had dropped, for, concealed by the fore hatch, he had overheard every word Mr. Normond had said to his son on the morning before the vessel sailed.

Bill was the first to come up after the dive. He had not seen the ring, and the moment Ben rose to the surface Bill exclaimed:

"Did you see it?"

"No," answered the other, shaking his head; "it is lost forever, whatever it was."

Bill, when the two were aboard, went into explanations.

"A sad affair," said Benjamin. "I hope it will not cause you trouble."

The loss of the ring troubled Bill less than the loss of Isabel Trueman's love. He endeavored on several occasions to speak to her, but somehow she always contrived to elude him. Once or twice, however, he caught her eye and fancied that its expression was softened.

Months later the vessel reached Honolulu, where Bill found a letter, informing him of the death of his father.

"Owing to the loss of that ring!" he exclaimed, one evening, several weeks after, "I shall probably be deprived of every cent of what belongs to me! Alas! but what is such loss compared to the loss of my sweet Isabel?"

Isabel stood partially screened by the mizzenmast. She now stepped forward, and touched the young man on the shoulder.

"Here!" she said—"here, sir, is your ring."

And, in fact, she put the jewel in his hand.

"Dear girl! How came you by this?"

"Your cousin went aloft," she replied, "a few minutes since. His foot slipped, and he was obliged to struggle violently to keep from falling. As he did so, something glittering in the moonlight dropped from him to my feet. I stooped, recognized the diamond ring, and so resolved to give it to its rightful owner."

"Ah! so my cousin did get the ring when he dove. What rascality for him to keep it! And you, dear Isabel, oh, how can I—"

He endeavored to take her hand, but she broke from him haughtily, and swept into the cabin.

Vainly did he afterward endeavor to change her resolution.

"We may be friends," she said, "but we can never—never marry while you are rich and I am poor. I cannot forget your unworthy suspicion."

Benjamin deserted the vessel on the day after his rascality was discovered, and Bill was glad to be rid of his presence.

Years after, steadily persevering, William Normond contrived to change the resolution of Isabel, who, having by this time inherited a considerable fortune from an old uncle, a sea captain, could not now be accused of marrying for money.

As to Benjamin, he met the fate which often befalls such rascals.

Shipping in a small schooner bound among the South Sea Islands for cocoanut oil, he went ashore one day on liberty, which was granted him with the rest of the crew. Bent upon mischief, and presuming too far upon the good nature of the natives, he entered a hut situated upon a lofty bluff, where the chief, with many of his warriors, was holding council—probably on some topic of grand importance to these untutored savages.

The chief, standing with his back to the newcomer, paid no attention to him, but went on addressing his men.

"Ay, now, is this the way you blueskins treat a civilized being, far superior to yourselves? If you should enter my country, you'd be kicked out for your lack of good breeding!"

"Me no 'zactly understandee," exclaimed the native, haughtily, while his black eyes fairly shot blue lightning, "but me no like you come in in this way. If you like take a seat, ah, very good—if you not, ah, quick throw you there!"

"No," he replied, meanwhile showing prudence enough to retreat toward the door. "The white men are not far off, and, should you throw me from this peak, they would kill every one of your tribe."

"Not so," answered the chief, smiling darkly, "the white men can no see you from where now standing. Me throw quick; then when white men come me say you slip and fell."

Benjamin at once perceived the truth of this argument. He turned deadly pale, then, goaded by the taunting smiles of the young warriors, he shook his fist at them as he still continu'd retreating, and uttered a scream of derision.

At this the old chief said something to a young brave, who instantly springing forth with a war club uplifted, pointed toward a rocky path leading down from the summit of the mountain.

The fiery eyes of the young savage made the impudent coward quail. He endeavored to retreat, but his trembling limbs caused him to stumble with his heel against a rocky projection.

His forward spring to recover his balance was by the native mistaken for an attempted assault, resulting in the unfortunate wretch being struck over the head with the club. Before he could cry out, another blow nearly stunned him, when, scarcely knowing what he did, he struggled fiercely for his life.

Fear and desperation nerved him to almost super-human strength. At last the native succeeded in pressing him back toward the edge of that cliff, beneath which, far down, yawned many a jagged, pointed pinnacle and spur.

The old chief now held up his club as a signal to the young native to desist; but the latter, stung to madness, gave Ben a sudden push that sent him over the dizzy brink.

His wild cry, resounding far and near, startled his shipmates, who, however, mistook it for that of some bird after its finny prey.

Years after, however, an old native, dying, told the truth.

Search was made for the skeleton of the wretch, but it could not be found, having, probably, been washed away by the merciless tides of old ocean.

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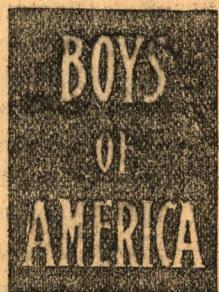


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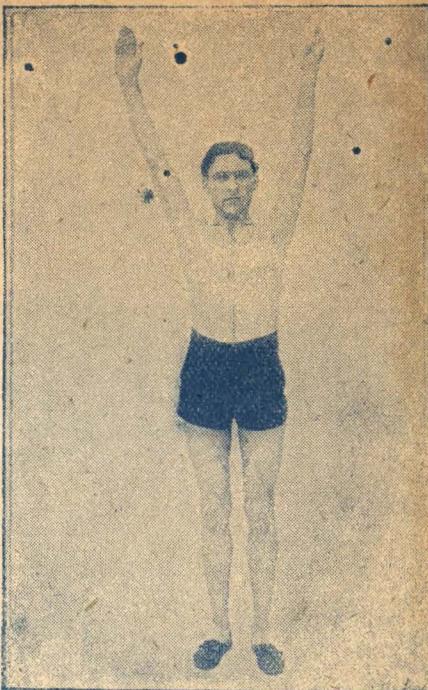
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